JUNE 23, 2003

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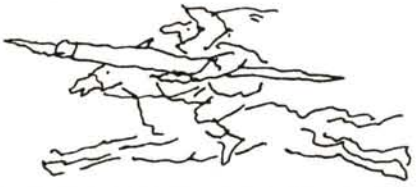

R.O. BLECHMAN

MO & THE CHICKS

New York City

■ Patricia J. Williams's column regarding my comments on the Dixie Chicks during a CNN interview only told half the story ["Diary of a Mad Law Professor," May 26 and June 9]. In that same interview I pointed out—and you can check the tape—that the Chicks' last single, "Landslide," was an obscene "glorification of a natural disaster that kills millions, some say up to a billion every year." (And we wonder why the terror alert was recently raised.) Until the Chicks are stopped I can't afford not to speak out. As Tobias Keith once wrote, "Oh, Justice will be served and the battle will rage. This big dog will fight when you rattle his cage… 'Cuz we'll put a boot in your ass. It's the American Way."

MO ROCCA, *activist/comedian*

THE MAD LAW PROFESSOR REPLIES

New York City

■ Oh well then. I defer to the American Way.

PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

IF NOT WELLSTONE, WHO?

Novato, Calif.

■ Jim Farrell's editorial criticizing Howard Dean has a fundamental flaw ["Dean's No Wellstone," May 26]. Dean's supporters do not think he's another Paul Wellstone; they think he's a candidate who can beat George W. Bush. Gephardt's record in Congress is certainly admirable, but his wooden oratory is worse than Al Gore's. Gore himself had progressive credentials, but lacked charisma and conviction. Dean has the aura of a natural leader, a reasonable record, the appeal of an outsider and an evident intelligence and flexibility people can trust. Betting on Dean gives us the possibility of having a Democrat and a progressive at once; betting on the rest guarantees we'll have Bush for another four years. ROBERT WRUBEL

Arundel, Me.

■ I agree that Howard Dean is not Paul Wellstone. Those of us fortunate enough to witness Wellstone's first run for the Senate were treated to a brand of local, progressive politics that no one had seen before. The Democratic Party must come up with a candidate that we all can support. I don't want to feel great about defeating Bush et al. and then find myself in the same sinking *bateau* on that proverbial creek. We the people need a living wage—now!, affordable single-payer healthcare—now!, Patriot Acts I and II repealed—NOW! So find us a candidate we can support *and* feel good about at the same time. BILL LEMERISE

Arlington, Va.

■ If Jim Farrell is looking for a candidate from the Wellstone wing of the Democratic Party, I suggest Representative Dennis Kucinich, who is closest to Wellstone both in principles and passion. The first candidate to oppose the Iraq war. The leader who organized 126 House Democrats to vote against the war. The sponsor of the Department of Peace and Nonviolence bill. The only candidate who marched in Seattle with the blue/green coalition of "Teamsters and turtles." The only one who will cancel NAFTA as his first act as President, because it rips off working families in Mexico, Canada and the United States, just to benefit multinationals. The only one willing to take the insurance companies out of healthcare, by supporting Canadian-style single-payer. The one who says the Iraq war was wrong despite the military victory, because it was an act of aggression unworthy of a great nation. The one who will cut the military budget and work to abolish the death penalty.

Just like Paul Wellstone, Dennis Kucinich is an unapologetic progressive with a hopeful spirit—a legislator who is also an organizer. Maybe that's why Wellstone was comfortable being the only senator in the Progressive Caucus, which Dennis Kucinich (and Barbara Lee) led. STEVE COBBLE

A SILVER FOOT IN HIS MOUTH

Aspen, Colo.

■ Bruce Cumings is right ["Bush's Bomb," May 19]. Bush has to turn his back on the missile deal with North Korea that Bill Clinton successfully negotiated before leaving office, because to the Bush Administration all diplomatic solutions are inherently suspect. This suspicion is part of a much deeper problem that is turning out to have devastating consequences both for the nation and for the world.

It does not take a speech pathologist to recognize that when left unscripted, this President is clearly at a disadvantage in the communications realm. It has been frequently observed by professionals treating this particular handicap that those so disadvantaged have a much shorter fuse and are therefore more prone to violence than the general population. Nowhere has this been more evident than in Bush's decision to short-circuit the diplomatic process in his jump to war against Iraq. It was almost as if he were merely going through the motions of diplomacy at the UN to assuage the multilateralist concerns of his father, Tony Blair and Colin Powell. After he had gotten the diplomatic phase behind him once and for all, he was transparently relieved to finally settle down to what he regarded as his "real" business—namely, war as the preferential option of someone who inevitably feels threatened and at an inherent disadvantage when it comes to negotiating solutions in the communications/diplomatic realm.

It is particularly troubling that this same pattern may be replicating itself in his dealings with North Korea. JOEL BRENCE

CUMINGS REPLIES

Chicago

■ Joel Brence is right about the endlessly short-circuited diplomacy of the Bush Administration, which should have caused Colin Powell to resign long ago. Instead he and his under secretaries go on one failed mission after another, as if Rumsfeld were scripting their pratfalls. But Brence is wrong about the cause, in my view. It isn't that Bush can't talk—his syntax being no worse than Ike's, and rather like his father's—it's that he has to speak with a forked tongue because of the huge internal splits in the Administration on just about every important issue. I've been drumming on this incoherence in *The Nation* for the past two years, but it's amazing how we get one news article after another documenting these splits, yet very little awareness on the editorial level of the chaos of Bush's foreign policy. Maybe when Rummy and Bush talk tough, people gain an impression of coherence. But Bush's failure as a President is his inability to get on top of this constant wrangling and derive a coherent foreign policy—or maybe the only "coherence" comes when he listens to Rumsfeld and Cheney, and then tramples on yet another principle of sound international relations. BRUCE CUMINGS

IN BED WITH WARRIORS

Jamesville, NY

■ Chris Hedges's "The Press and the Myths of War" [April 21] is powerful and disturbing. The seductive lures of the myth are spread by the media under the guise of glory, honor and patriotism, and act to obscure the underlying obscenity of war. They serve less to inform than to entertain. This perpetuates the very "evil" used as the justification for massive destruction and disdain for life itself. JOHN MALLAN

Cleveland Heights, Ohio

■ Thank you to Chris Hedges for his magnificent meditation on the myths of war. The brilliant ploy of placing the press in bed with soldiers played out exactly as we knew it would. A painfully illuminating proof of Hedges's observations is to imagine what news would be like if reporters were embedded in the peace movement. So many of the feelings of camaraderie and group identification he describes have a mirror in what resistance to war felt like in

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EDITORIALS

Missing WMD Scandal

"Intelligence gathered by this and other governments leaves no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised," George W. Bush told the nation two days before he launched the war on Iraq. That definitive statement came after months of Administration assertions that Saddam Hussein was an imminent threat because he had weapons of mass destruction and could hand them over to Al Qaeda at any moment. "We know for a fact that there are weapons there," Ari Fleischer declared in January. A month earlier Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said, "It is clear that the Iraqis have weapons of mass destruction. The issue is not whether or not they have weapons of mass destruction."

Two months after the fall of Baghdad, it is anything but clear. No WMDs have been found. The Pentagon has two trailers that the CIA says were manufactured as bioweapons labs, but no trace of biological agents has been detected in them (see Russ Baker's "'Scoops' and Truth at the *Times*," page 18). Former UN weapons inspectors say it would be virtually impossible to scour a bioweapons facility free of all residue—which means that even if those trailers were built to breed pathogens, they were not used. Speaking in Poland, Bush insisted, "We found the weapons of mass destruction. We found biological laboratories." Those were the words of a desperate man.

In England Prime Minister Tony Blair has been rocked by claims that his government hyped the intelligence on Iraq's weapons. Members of Parliament have announced they will investigate, and anger is running high. Labour MP Malcolm Savidge said in a CNBC interview from London that if allegations on both sides of the Atlantic that legislators and citizens were misled into war are true, "I would say...that would clearly be a more serious issue than even Watergate. It would be a graver charge" and "fit into the definition of high crimes and misdemeanors, which we in Britain used to have as a basis for impeachment, and which, of course, you still have as a basis of impeachment."

In the United States, Bush and his team are also facing embarrassing questions. Before the war, Rumsfeld said the intelligence was solid; now he suggests there was much less certainty. At a recent public talk, he suggested that Iraq may have destroyed its chemical weapons before the war—in other words, the war may have been waged to rid Iraq of weapons it had gotten rid of. In an interview with *Vanity Fair*, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz said, "For bureaucratic reasons, we settled on one issue, weapons of mass destruction, because it was the one reason everyone could agree on"—suggesting that Bush had mounted the WMD scare as a consensus-driven marketing device.

Congressional intelligence and armed services committees have announced their intention to investigate the Administration's WMD claims. Presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich will invoke a rarely used House procedure, a resolution of inquiry, to demand the release of intelligence that led to the war. All Americans—for or against the war—should welcome wide-ranging reviews. But an independent commission should also be created to operate outside the Republican-controlled Congress. Such a commission is needed to rebuild confidence in our democratic institutions. Sending Americans to fight in a war fueled by deceit and fabricated intelligence would be a betrayal of the trust between citizens and their government. A serious investigation—which should be carried out by established leaders who have displayed a willingness to cut against Washington's grain—might also help restore America's damaged international reputation.

The questions are obvious. Was intelligence adequate? Was it trumped up? Did the Administration have credible evidence to back up its charges? Was a new Pentagon intelligence review

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COMMENT

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outfit set up to pursue the truth—or to produce dishonest reports to bolster the case for an attack? But the members of the Congressional committees—and all investigative bodies—must bear in mind that the ultimate question is a simple one: Did Bush use lies to mislead the nation into war?

COMMENT

Taking Aim at Iran

Right-wingers in Washington have begun preparing the ground for US action, perhaps even war, against Iran. Their mostly baseless allegations against Iraq—of developing nuclear weapons and backing Al Qaeda—worked so well in whipping up war fever that the inside-the-Beltway hawks are now recycling them. This time Teheran is the mark.

Neoconservative William Kristol, editor of *The Weekly Standard*, wrote that "the liberation of Iraq was the first great battle for the future of the Middle East." He added, "The next great battle—not, we hope, a military battle—will be for Iran." In an ironic reversal of the old domino theory, Kristol now argues that America must take down Iran to prevent it from intervening among Shiites in US-occupied Iraq. One intervention requires the next. But in fact, more Iraqis seem interested in radical Shiism than do Iranians.

Iran is charged with harboring Al Qaeda. But Al Qaeda and the Taliban waged a vicious campaign of assassination and pogroms against Shiites in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and came close to war with Shiite-dominated Iran. Iran's Sunni tribes or rogue elements in the Revolutionary Guards might give refuge to Al Qaeda. It is highly unlikely that the Iranian establishment would.

Neoconservatives tag Iran as a backer of terrorism because of its support for Hezbollah in Lebanon. It has, however, been many years since Hezbollah was significantly involved in international terrorism, as opposed to fighting Israeli military occupation of Lebanon and then of the disputed border enclave, the Shebaa Farms. An equitable settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would deprive its paramilitary of a raison d'être. That's a better way to encourage its evolution into a mainstream Lebanese political party than fomenting revolution in Teheran.

As for the charge that Iran is interested in nuclear weapons, it may or may not be true. Since we were misled by fraudulent documents about a post-1998 Iraqi nuclear program, we should demand unassailable proof of Iranian capabilities before even discussing what steps should be taken to address them.

Iran itself is a far more ambiguous dictatorship than Baathist Iraq. Its society is roiled by a lively contest between hard-line Khomeinist theocrats and a gamut of reformist forces that wish to open the system up to democracy and to achieve more personal liberties. The liberalizers have captured Parliament and have a friend in the elected President, Muhammad Khatami. They have been stymied in their attempts at reform since 1997, however, by the iron grip that hard-line clerics retain on the levers of power. The Supreme Jurisprudent, Ali Khamenei, controls the judiciary; appoints much of the Guardian Council, which reviews parliamen-

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tary legislation; and serves as commander in chief of the armed forces. The hard-liners have closed dozens of reformist newspapers and jailed editors, reporters and even parliamentarians.

President Khatami has deeply frustrated many reformists by his seeming unwillingness to take on the hard-liners despite his enormous popular mandate. After the political violence of the late 1970s and '80s, Khatami does not wish to risk civil war. He himself is rumored to have been the target of a foiled assassination plot by rogue Revolutionary Guards.

Even in a town with as short a historical memory as Washington, surely some sense of déjà vu must attend these fevered dreams of destabilizing the Iranian government. In 1953 the CIA overthrew the elected prime minister, Mohammed Mossadegh, and reinstalled on the throne Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. The shah was ever after regarded as a foreign imposition, and this lack of legitimacy made him vulnerable to being overthrown by the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

There is a real danger that the Washington hawks will undermine the reformist movement in an Iran still touchy about foreign intervention by making the liberals look like Western puppets. Iranian hard-liners have been warning for decades about evil American intentions, and the US hawks inside and outside the Defense Department are only playing into their hands and giving them credibility with this saber-rattling. The Iranian electorate could easily swing to the right in the face of such imperialism.

In 1998 President Khatami called for "a dialogue of civilizations" and suggested people-to-people diplomacy between Iran and the United States. The Bush Administration has been uninterested in such efforts. If America is sincere about support for democracy in Iran, it could profitably respond to Khatami's call. The Administration has a choice of repeating the mistakes of 1953 and heavy-handedly intervening in Iran's complex political evolution, or of replicating the achievement of Nixon in opening up China. The latter course may not lead immediately to a democratic Iran, but neither does it risk unleashing a new wave of terrorism against the United States if the chickens come home to roost. They usually do.

JUAN COLE

Juan Cole (www.juancole.com), a professor of Middle Eastern and South Asian history at the University of Michigan, is the author of Sacred Space and Holy War *(IB Tauris).*

Standing Up to the FCC

Even as he condemned the 3-to-2 vote of the Federal Communications Commission to allow media conglomerates to dramatically increase their control over newspapers and radio and television stations, Commissioner Michael Copps closed his twenty-three-page dissent on an optimistic note. "This Commission's drive to loosen the rules and its reluctance to share its proposals with the people before we voted awoke a sleeping giant," Copps said. "American citizens are standing up in never-before-seen numbers to reclaim their airwaves and to call on those who are entrusted to use them to serve the public interest."

Copps's comments are a reminder that while opponents of the media-ownership rule changes lost the June 2 fight, public indignation over the FCC process and the prospect of increased consolidation of media ownership may have built an army that can win the war. Mere months ago, few expected that the FCC would receive 750,000 e-mails, cards, letters and calls opposing the changes. Fewer still imagined that groups as diverse as Code Pink: Women's Pre-emptive Strike for Peace and the National Rifle Association would see the logic of Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein's suggestion that the "McDonaldization" of media would leave little room for dissenting voices on the left or on the noncorporate right. And no one dared speculate that more than 150 members of Congress would actively oppose rule changes promoted by some of the most powerful special interests in America.

When the FCC went ahead with the changes, Congress went ballistic. "The FCC has ignored the public's will and the public interest to enact a massive giveaway of public resources to a few privileged insiders," declared Senator John Edwards, as he and fellow Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry sought to outflank each other as the Senate's chief champion of media diversity. Senator Trent Lott said of the FCC's decision to allow one network to buy up TV stations that reach as much as 45 percent of the national audience: "A lot of Republicans, in fact, probably most of the Republicans in Congress, would not agree with this decision."

If Lott's right, there's hope for Congressional moves to codify a 35 percent cap on national broadcast ownership, for appropriations language to limit the FCC's ability to implement the newly relaxed rules and for a call by senators for antitrust regulators to stop mergers and acquisitions that injure media competition.

And if Commissioner Copps is right that an angry giant has been awakened, that anger must be marshaled to support not just a rollback of the FCC's June 2 action but also challenges to conditions that existed before the vote: hypercommercialization, diminished public service commitments and consolidation of radio station ownership. Copps says that now "we have a chance

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CALVIN TRILLIN

REPORT ON THE SEARCH FOR WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION IN IRAQ, FROM THE REPUBLICAN MILITARY COMMAND (KARL ROVE, LT. GENERAL, COMMANDING)

We can't yet find the nukes and gas,
Though we have looked in every section.
But we may find them in Iran—
And just before the next election.

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JONATHAN SCHELL

Thinking Movement, Working Demonstration

In the months before the American-Anglo invasion of Iraq, the peace movement was out on the streets demonstrating. Since the fall of the Iraqi regime, it has been less in evidence. But the silence does not mean inactivity. The movement is thinking. What are its responsibilities toward occupied Iraq and its people? What are the occupation's implications for the Middle East? For the world? What should the United Nations do now? What should the target of protest be? What are the connections between war abroad and the attack on civil liberties and social justice at home? What vision of a better world can the movement offer? And then there is the inescapable corresponding question: What should be done? How big should the movement's tent be? Should the global justice and the global peace movements merge? What should the role of the environmental movement be? To what extent should the US movement join the global movement and to what extent preserve a separate identity? What is its role in the 2004 election?

These questions and others are being asked at hundreds of meetings and in an infinity of conversations, memos and e-mails. For example, on April 26 US Labor Against the War passed a resolution stating, "American working families face a domestic crisis. This crisis has been intensified by the Bush administration's foreign and domestic policies of military intervention abroad and neglect at home that benefit corporations and the wealthy at the expense of working families." In Jakarta in May, representatives of major peace and justice groups around the world met and endorsed a document called the "Jakarta Peace Consensus." The Green Party is broadening its agenda to include issues of peace and justice. At the University of California, Irvine, the Citizen Peacebuilding Program held a meeting of West Coast peace groups to take stock and plan for the future. In Washington, several conferences have jostled for attention: one held by Tikkun Community, an offshoot of *Tikkun* magazine, and one called Take Back America, organized by the Campaign for America's Future. The broadest of the US umbrella groups, United for Peace and Justice, is convening a meeting in Chicago to make its plans.

Anybody with ten minutes of experience in politics will recognize that a process of reflection and planning of this breadth is similar to what must occur when people are founding a political party—that is, a collection of people prepared not just to protest an existing order but to change it and to take responsibility for the results. For a peace and justice party, the concentration on "economics" would be replaced by a concentration on *justice* (the economy must serve society, rather than the other way around), and the concentration on "security" would be replaced by a concentration on *peace* (that is, security would be sought through peace, not war). Yet such words as "movement" and "party" are themselves under re-examination. A richer understanding of activism and the way it can change the world is developing. "History," Rebecca Solnit comments in her essay "Acts of Hope" in *Orion* magazine, "is shaped by the groundswells and common dreams that single acts and moments only represent." And the same may be true of movements and parties.

But, of course, there is no Peace and Justice Party, not globally and not locally, nor is there likely to be one anytime soon, and so the question of what to do concretely in the near future remains in the foreground. One date that fairly leaps off the calendar is August 30, 2004, when the Republican Party will begin its convention in New York City, just a few miles from the World Trade Center crater. The time and place were chosen by the GOP for their rich symbolism. The peace and justice movement is likely to show up en masse to do the same. A confrontation of epic proportions may be in the making. Medea Benjamin, a founding director of the global justice organization Global Exchange, foresees "a day of action against the empire." She proposes the message, "The World Says No to Bush." Some activists, she reports, are considering a "huge global electronic vote" for or against the United States imperial ambitions. She also wants the global justice movement to "come to Middle America." The question of whether the global justice movement and the global peace movement would merge, she says, was in fact answered by the worldwide antiwar demonstrations of February 15, when the two became one on the ground. The merged stream will come to New York in August 2004.

Other activists are concentrating more on the elections of 2004. David Cortright, president of the Fourth Freedom Forum and a member of the guiding committee of the antiwar organization Win Without War, proposes concentrated efforts to defeat Bush in swing states. "Everybody's attention is focused on regime change at home," he comments. "How to do that is less clear. On the one hand, it's easy to understand that we have to be in these battleground states, such as Florida, Ohio and Michigan—not so much in California and New York. But the peace movement also has to address the question of security and the threat of terrorism. Bush can't run on the economy and the environment, but he can run on the fear of the threat of terrorism. Bush political adviser Karl Rove has indicated that's what they intend to do." The potential for conflicts between the local and the global strategies is obvious. A substantial portion of the electorate may resent what they would see as "foreign" intervention in American electoral affairs. Asked if she feared a nationalist backlash in the United States, Medea Benjamin answered, "I almost welcome it." The world is affected by American decisions, she explains, and has a right to participate in them. Cortright approves of demonstrations at the Republican convention but wants them to be "handled right." He says, "The message has to be that the people of New York say no to Bush's attempt to exploit their city for political advantage." He also believes, for reasons both principled and tactical, that any and all demonstrations should be rigorously nonviolent. On the one hand, a movement against violence must not itself be violent. On the other hand, a nonviolent movement is less likely to anger voters.

The relationship of the movement to the election presents other questions. In the United States, the movement now represents a minority view. The need, as at other times in recent US history (including the anti–Vietnam War and civil rights movements), is to bring this minority view into the mainstream. Yet to achieve anything, the movement must first *exist*. To that end, places for it to

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

We're Shocked, Shocked!

It's hard to choose which deserves the coarser jeer: the excited baying in the press about the nondiscovery of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, or the wailing about the 3-to-2 decision of the Federal Communications Commission in early June to allow corporate media giants to increase their domination of the market.

Actually, they're all part of the same bundle of nonsense, and if we meld the two, we're left with the following absurd proposition, most eagerly promoted by Democrats to impart the impression that only greedy Republicans are serfs of the corporate media titans, and that the Telecommunications "Reform" Act of 1996 was actually a well-intended effort to return the airwaves to We the People.

The absurd proposition: Before the June 2 FCC ruling unleashed darkness upon the land, we were afforded diversity of choice and a multiplicity of analyses, not just from hole-in-the-wall operations like Pacifica or satellite-based LINKS TV but from the journalistic mainstream. But now, after the FCC decision, these voices will soon be stilled. We are entering the era of Big Brother.

You think I'm joking? Here's what one of the two Democratic FCC commissioners, Michael Copps, said before the vote, with his grand words now approvingly quoted by liberal editorial writers and pundits: "Today the Federal Communications Commission empowers America's new media elite with unacceptable levels of influence over the ideas and information upon which our society and our democracy so heavily depend. The decision we five make today will recast our entire media landscape for years to come. At issue is whether a few corporations will be ceded enhanced gatekeeper control over the civil dialogue of our country; more content control over our music, entertainment and information; and veto power over the majority of what our families watch, hear and read."

Now, didn't this happen, oh, forty, fifty, maybe seventy years ago? Of course it did. All that happened on June 2 is that things got slightly worse, but not to any degree instantly apparent to the long-suffering national audience.

The press is now happily passing the buck to the intelligence services, quoting former analysts from the CIA and DIA complaining that scholarly objectivity collapsed in the face of political pressure. We're shocked, shocked!

Intelligence services invariably succumb in the face of political bullying. But it didn't matter that the CIA and DIA were cowed by the wild men in Rumsfeld's DoD, who said Iraq was still bristling with WMDs. Any enterprising news editor could have found (and some did) plenty of solid evidence to support the claim that Saddam had destroyed his WMDs; that he had no alliance with Al Qaeda.

In the run-up to the attack on Iraq, the worst journalistic outrages came in two publications at the supposed pinnacle of the profession: the *New York Times*, which recycled the Iraqi exile Ahmad Chalabi's agenda through its reporter Judith Miller; and *The New Yorker*, which printed Jeffrey Goldberg's nonsense about the Saddam/Al Qaeda "connection." That was no consequence of media concentration, or the perversion of intelligence analysis by political priorities.

Simply on the grounds of common sense about the prejudices of his reporter and her source, Howell Raines, executive editor of the *Times*, should have told Miller to qualify her stories. David Remnick, the editor of *The New Yorker*, could have as easily punched holes in Goldberg's story. Instead, they delightedly hyped shoddy journalism that played a far greater role in the White House's propaganda blitz than the performance of the cowed CIA and DIA.

It's easy to be right *after* the event. It took real fiber to stand out against the war party when it was in full cry. The bulk of the mainstream press failed dismally in its watchdog role, and a little more forthrightness about this failure would be welcome indeed. But can we expect the hounds of war, like Tim Russert, to apologize? Of course not. Some senator will probably, sometime soon, grill the CIA's George Tenet and the other intelligence chiefs who failed in the hour of need, but Russert, or Miller, or Raines, or Remnick, or Punch Sulzberger? Never.

* * *

US District Judge Charles Breyer sentenced Ed Rosenthal on June 4 to one day in prison on each of three counts, stemming from his conviction earlier this year for supplying medical marijuana under license by the City of Oakland. Breyer also fined him $1,000 and then freed him.

Rosenthal could have gone to prison for up to twenty years. His family and supporters went to court in San Francisco with a best-case scenario that Rosenthal would get a medium-term sentence and then be freed pending appeal. The one-day sentence was unexpected and shows the political effect of the popular uproar after Rosenthal's conviction and after six of the jurors publicly apologized to him for convicting him after Breyer had prevented them from hearing the full background of the case.

As a member of the liberal elite (and brother of US Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer), Breyer had no particular appetite for public opprobrium. Having insured Rosenthal's conviction, Breyer now walks him and hands the future of California's medical marijuana law to the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, which is already considering the issue. Breyer will now be applauded for magnanimity. But the law still stands, and the federal onslaught on medical marijuana providers without the public reputation of Rosenthal continues. There are plenty of people in prison for far, far longer than a day.

Rosenthal's appeal will go forward, as part of the fight for states' rights and the legitimacy of California's Prop 215, which legalized medical marijuana back in 1996. But we're only at the beginning of a long-term political struggle, and at the cutting edge of that struggle will be rebellious juries setting the law aside and consulting their conscience. Only they can save the Feds' next targets. ■

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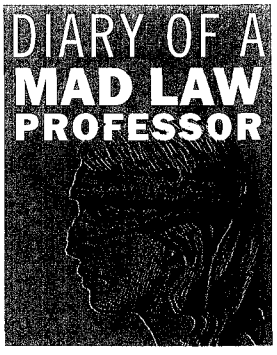
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

The New Mobility



A recent article in the *Washington Post* described some suburban high schoolers preparing for their proms by spending nearly $3,000 to rent an H2 Hummerzine, "complete with six TVs, a DVD player, strobe lights under the leather seats, a faux fireplace, a fog machine and a disco ball." Sushi bars are optional. I was pretty judgmental when I first heard this. Three thousand dollars that could be better spent, I mused, taking a lobbyist to lunch. Or learning lessons with William Bennett. Or providing a week's worth of groceries for thirty children of minimum-wage earners whose promised tax credits were axed in the wee hours before the new tax law was passed. Young people these days…

Upon more sober reflection, I began to think that perhaps the wise promgoer would be best advised to apply the three thou as a down payment toward outright purchase of said Hummerzine. If the tax laws are not kind to poor families, they do provide breaks for those who buy six tons of vehicle (or more, with sushi bar). And where there are bars, sushi or otherwise, I believe city ordinances mandate that there be restrooms. Park the sucker in a good school district, throw in some loft space *et voilà!* wretched excess turns into reasonable real estate.

But the aspirations of the teens quoted in the *Post* were strictly short-term. They said they wanted to feel like queen-for-a-day, J-Lo-for-a-night. It was interesting, this choice of Hummerzine as bulletproof pumpkin. It was curious, this figuring of tank as magic coach. Perhaps military-style vehicles have been romanticized more than I appreciate, in music videos and Fox war montages (according to one poll, 75 percent of undergraduates say they trust the military to "do the right thing" either "all of the time" or "most of the time"). Or perhaps it's some kind of post-Columbine chic of the *semper paratus*.

Whatever Hummers might symbolize to promgoers, they make me think of the Malthusian prognostications of grim futurists like Samuel Huntington and Robert Kaplan. From this genre of predicted global anarchy, there has emerged a trope of the stretch limousine as cocoon inhabited by wealthy First Worlders while desperate, ragged Third Worlders tap at the darkened windows begging for tossed favors. Don DeLillo's latest novel, *Cosmopolis*, takes this image for a ride, so to speak: The banker-narrator glides through the hardscrabble canyons of Manhattan, periodically descending into the tumult of street life then retreating back to the limo, his soundproof, air-conditioned matrix. In the end he goes broke, has to hail a cab. The moral is clear: If he'd had sufficient fire in the belly to begin with, he would have had a Hummer.

Perhaps it's just me. I do feel as though we have entered some kind of alternate universe, some game concocted in a cyberwarzone. It's as though the Bush Administration is using Kaplan and Huntington as templates rather than cautionary tales. It's as though they've set out to map The Coming Chaos into being—throwing out the rules of diplomatic engagement, launching "preemptive" war, turning ally against ally, magically transforming the federal surplus into a multitrillion-dollar deficit, consolidating the major media outlets into a singular right-wing bullhorn of rage, degrading the environment and upgrading the secret police. What remains of government funding is earmarked for technology that will map every wiggle in our walk, every giggle in our talk, every twiddle in our DNA.

The modern Cinderella, tracked from the womb, would never make it past the concrete barriers in front of the palace. Her name on the security list rather than the "A," she'd be hustled off for questioning about her association with that elusive alien with the strange blue glow, the one last seen waving a radioactive stick in the vicinity of six white lab rats. And those stiletto-heeled glass mules would end up in a dipsy dumpster of confiscated potential weaponry. Similarly, as high schoolers around the country elect their prom kings and queens, they compete imagistically against the king and queen of hearts in the Pentagon's "Most Wanted" deck of Iraqi bad guys. Or against the king and queen of "bleeding hearts" in the commercially popular Deck of Weasels, a set with the faces of celebrities and politicians who have criticized the Bush Administration. Or against that Republican-issued deck with face cards of the Democratic Texas legislators who removed themselves to Oklahoma in order to block Tom DeLay's redistricting plan.

Yet the romance of the Cinderella story that most Americans embrace, or embraced until recently, is rooted in a dream of self-invention, of economic as well as personal liberation. Unlike Margaret Atwood's dystopian *The Handmaid's Tale*, Americans gobble up fantasies like *Maid in Manhattan*; our engines are fired by the belief that with hard work and the right makeover, being a maid in Manhattan need only be a phase. People love Cinderella for her challenge to the feudal order, her quintessential class-hopping freedom. But today's high schoolers are graduating into a world of upwardly spiraling tuition costs and downwardly spiraling job prospects; of meanspiritedness toward the poor, of powerlessness of the middle class and indifference among the rich. They face a future in which the tracking of educational, economic and behavioral patterns risks reinstating a kind of social stasis that will keep large numbers of (yes, even white) Americans ghettoized and "in their place" to a degree we have not seen in this country for generations.

I suppose I am not a good one to decipher the youthful preference for what is in effect—and affect—an elegantly appointed bomb shelter on wheels. Humvees are hard for me to fit into the sugarplum order of crisp tuxedos, tulle skirts and happily ever after. If teens are expressing a sense of their own destiny—however sardonically—it seems a hard-edged vision, like using a pit bull as fashion prop; a dream of guarded hearts preparing for a wild ride, determined to party on in the necropolis, as though the end were nigh. ■

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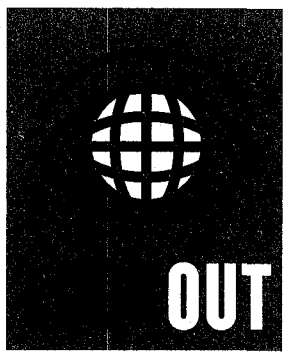
NAOMI KLEIN

Downsizing in Disguise



The streets of Baghdad are a swamp of crime and uncollected garbage. Battered local businesses are going bankrupt, unable to compete with cheap imports. Unemployment is soaring and thousands of laid-off state workers are protesting in the streets.

In other words, Iraq looks like every other country that has undergone rapid-fire "structural adjustments" prescribed by Washington, from Russia's infamous "shock therapy" in the early 1990s to Argentina's disastrous "surgery without anesthetic." Except that Iraq's "reconstruction" makes those wrenching reforms look like spa treatments.

Paul Bremer, the US-appointed governor of Iraq, has already proved something of a flop in the democracy department in his few weeks there, nixing plans for Iraqis to select their own interim government in favor of his own handpicked team of advisers. But Bremer has proved to have something of a gift when it comes to rolling out the red carpet for US multinationals.

For a few weeks Bremer has been hacking away at Iraq's public sector like former Sunbeam exec "Chainsaw" Al Dunlap in a flak jacket. On May 16 Bremer banned up to 30,000 senior Baath Party officials from government jobs. A week later, he dissolved the army and the information ministry, putting more than 400,000 Iraqis out of work without pensions or re-employment programs.

Of course, if Saddam Hussein's henchmen and propagandists held on to power in Iraq it would be a human rights disaster. "De-Baathification," as the purging of party officials has come to be called, may be the only way to prevent a comeback by Saddam's crew—and the only silver lining of George Bush's illegal war.

But Bremer has gone far beyond purging powerful Baath loyalists and moved into a full-scale assault on the state itself. Doctors who joined the party as children and have no love for Saddam face dismissal, while low-level civil servants with no ties to the party have been fired en masse. Nuha Najeeb, who ran a Baghdad printing house, told Reuters, "I...had nothing to do with Saddam's media, so why am I sacked?"

As the Bush Administration becomes increasingly open about its plans to privatize Iraq's state industries and parts of the government, Bremer's de-Baathification takes on new meaning. Is he working only to get rid of Baath Party members, or is he also working to shrink the public sector as a whole so that hospitals, schools and even the army are primed for privatization by US firms? Just as reconstruction is the guise for privatization, de-Baathification looks a lot like disguised downsizing.

Similar questions arise from Bremer's chainsaw job on Iraqi companies, already pummeled by almost thirteen years of sanctions and two months of looting. Bremer didn't even wait to get the lights back on in Baghdad, for the dinar to stabilize or for the spare parts to arrive for Iraq's hobbled factories before he declared on May 26 that Iraq was "open for business." Duty-free imported TVs and packaged food flooded across the border, pushing many stressed Iraqi businesses, unable to compete, into bankruptcy. This is how Iraq joined the global "free market": in the dark.

Paul Bremer is, according to Bush, a "can-do" type of person. Indeed he is. In less than a month he has readied large swaths of state activity for corporate takeover, primed the Iraqi market for foreign importers to make a killing by eliminating much of the local competition and made sure there won't be any unpleasant Iraqi government interference—in fact, he's made sure there will be no Iraqi government at all while key economic decisions are made. Bremer is Iraq's one-man IMF.

Like so many Bush foreign policy players, Bremer sees war as a business opportunity. On October 11, 2001, just one month after the terror attacks in New York and Washington, Bremer, once Ronald Reagan's Ambassador at Large for counterterrorism, launched a company designed to capitalize on the new atmosphere of fear in US corporate boardrooms. Crisis Consulting Practice, a division of insurance giant Marsh & McLennan, specializes in helping multinationals come up with "integrated and comprehensive crisis solutions" for everything from terror attacks to accounting fraud. Thanks to a strategic alliance with Versar, which specializes in biological and chemical threats, clients of the two companies are treated to "total counterterrorism services."

To sell this sort of high-priced protection to US firms, Bremer had to make the kinds of frank links between terrorism and the failing global economy that activists are called lunatics for articulating. In a November 2001 policy paper titled "New Risks in International Business," he explains that free-trade policies "require laying off workers. And opening markets to foreign trade puts enormous pressure on traditional retailers and trade monopolies." This leads to "growing income gaps and social tensions," which in turn can lead to a range of attacks on US firms, from terrorism to government attempts to reverse privatizations or roll back trade incentives.

He could be describing the backlash his own policies are provoking in Iraq. But then guys like Bremer always know how to play both sides. Like a hacker who cripples corporate websites then sells himself as a network security specialist, in a few months Bremer may well be selling terrorism insurance to the very companies he welcomed into Iraq.

And why not? As Bremer told his clients back at Marsh, globalization may have "immediate negative consequences for many," but it also leads to "the creation of unprecedented wealth."

It has for Bremer and his cronies. On May 15, three days after he arrived in Iraq, his former boss, MMC chairman Jeffrey Greenberg, announced that 2002 "was a great year for Marsh; operating income was up 31 percent.... Marsh's expertise in analyzing risk and helping clients develop risk management programs has been in great demand.... Our prospects have never been better."

Many have pointed out that Bremer is no expert on Iraqi politics. But that was never the point. He is an expert at profiting from the war on terror and at helping US multinationals make money in far-off places where they are unpopular and unwelcome. In other words, he's the perfect man for the job. ■

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ARTICLES

Iraq

SELLING (OFF)

How to "privatize" a country and make millions

by TIM SHORROCK

Martin Hoffmann, a former Secretary of the Army and a key adviser to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, is known in Washington as the man who urged Rumsfeld, an old friend from Princeton, to hire executives from Enron and other corporations to lead the armed services. Recently, he and Michael Bleyzer, a former Exxon executive who runs a private equity firm that invests heavily in Bleyzer's native Ukraine, have been briefing senior US officials, including Rumsfeld himself, on their ideas for the rapid privatization of Iraq's state-run industries.

Hoffmann and Bleyzer want the Bush Administration to allow the private sector to supplant the US Agency for International Development (AID) as the driving force behind the reconstruction of postwar Iraq. They consult frequently with Robert "Bud" McFarlane, President Reagan's National Security Adviser, who runs a company that invests in energy projects in Russia and Eastern Europe. McFarlane and Bleyzer co-wrote a recent commentary in the *Wall Street Journal* called "Taking Iraq Private." "We're all in there trying to figure out a different way to get effective American economic development assistance going over there, and AID is just not up to it," said Hoffmann, who is also chairman of the board of Mitretek Systems, a Virginia company that does technical research for the Defense Department and other government agencies. He said Rumsfeld "is very knowledgeable about this kind of development assistance" and once accompanied him on a trip to Ukraine to conduct a seminar on privatization.

"What I'd like to see over the next ten years is to really rebuild Iraq, and that means a market economy," said Bleyzer, adding that Iraq would have a "much better business environment if BP or Exxon-Mobil or Shell could invest. We want to set up a business environment where global companies like Coca-Cola and McDonald's could come in and create a diversified economy not dependent on oil." McFarlane, who said he has "no formal ties" with Bleyzer's fund, was enthusiastic about the work of his colleagues. "I hope their concepts are being digested inside the Administration," he said.

Apparently they are. On May 27 Rumsfeld pledged in an opinion column in the *Journal* that Bush is committed to making decisions in Iraq that "favor market systems" and "encourage moves to privatize state-owned enterprises."

The relationships between Rumsfeld and the three men are a microcosm of what is happening in Washington as US corporations, entrepreneurs and former officials scramble to take advantage of the occupation of Iraq—now legalized by the UN Security Council's May 22 vote to lift sanctions—in order to win a piece of the market and press their ideas for transforming the Iraqi economy. Already, Bechtel, the San Francisco engineering powerhouse, was hired by AID as the prime contractor to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure in a project worth at least $680 million. And the Kellogg Brown & Root unit of Halliburton, the oil-services company once headed by Vice President Dick Cheney, took control of

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America's Role In The World

Protector or Predator?

A debate featuring

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and
Bill Emmott, Editor of *The Economist*
Moderated by WNYC's
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Iraq's oilfields under a controversial, no-bid contract from the Army Corps of Engineers. In May the Pentagon awarded MCI a contract of about $45 million to build a wireless network in Iraq.

Meanwhile, behind closed doors in the Pentagon and State Department and on Washington's K Street corridor, executives, bankers, trade lawyers and consultants are using their influence to create opportunities for future profits in Iraq. Those groups, and the relationships they have developed with Iraqi exiles and Washington insiders, underscore the politicized nature of the US rebuilding effort and the hopes of many officials that Iraq will become an engine of growth, not only for the region but for US corporations searching for new markets and investment sites.

Rumsfeld's roadmap for Iraq reflects the aggressive foreign policy championed by neoconservative hawks such as Richard Perle and former CIA Director James Woolsey, both members of Rumsfeld's Defense Policy Board. For more than a decade, they have been part of a group of militant conservatives pushing to invade Iraq and, in Woolsey's words, "change the face of the Middle East." The group includes former officials like McFarlane as well as key figures from the current Administration, including Rumsfeld and his top deputy, Paul Wolfowitz.

"What I think we have won on the battlefield is the right to try to establish consistent policies that are for the benefit of the people of Iraq," Perle said in an April speech at the American Enterprise Institute. "It's not that we are looking for anything for ourselves, but we do have responsibility, a stewardship," not to "turn it [Iraq] over to institutions incapable of seeing this through to a successful conclusion." In an aside, he added that "the last thing the Iraqis need is French statism or German labor practices." Woolsey was equally blunt when he spoke to a May 1 closed-door conference on postwar Iraq co-sponsored by his employer, the consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton, where he's an officer in the global strategic security unit. "Basically, he said to hell with France, to hell with Germany and to hell with the United Nations; the United States is going to do this alone," an Arab banker recalled. Two other attendees confirmed that account.

Both Woolsey and Perle are involved in businesses that could benefit from the war on terrorism. Woolsey is a principal of Paladin Capital Group, a Washington-based private-equity firm investing in companies that defend against terrorist attacks. Perle has financial stakes in a similar fund known as Trireme Partners and in the Autonomy Corporation, which supplies eavesdropping software to intelligence agencies. Perle was also hired to advise telecom giant Global Crossing and provided security briefings to the investment firm Goldman Sachs.

Those conflicts of interest could cause trouble for the Administration and in Perle's case have already done so, leading him to resign as chair of the Defense Policy Board after revelations of his ties to companies doing business with the Pentagon. "I think they're going to have a problem in resolving the greedy impulses of companies and individuals, and the need for this to be a showcase for the world," said Philip Mattera, the director of the Cor-

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porate Research Project, a nonprofit group that analyzes corporations for unions and community organizations.

Echoes of Vietnam

According to AID administrator Andrew Natsios, the US government will spend no more than $1.7 billion for Iraq's immediate reconstruction needs. With Iraq's infrastructure a shambles, much of its government ministries and agencies looted, and its gross domestic product estimated by the Treasury Department at somewhere between $25 billion and $60 billion a year—less than half of what it was in 1978—many analysts believe the country will need at least $200 billion more to meet the Bush Administration's goal of creating a functioning market economy. Even if half of that is provided by oil revenues and multilateral institutions like the World Bank, that still leaves a gap of $100 billion for private investors. "FDI [foreign direct investment] is the answer to all Iraq's problems," said Bleyzer.

There is a kind of missionary fervor among those participating in the effort. "The United States has a moral obligation to make this country work," said Bart Fisher, a Washington trade lawyer who helped found the US-Iraq Business Council last June. Now that sanctions have been lifted and legal avenues are being cleared for foreign investment, Fisher predicts a surge of investment in information technology ("I think IBM would be very interested in getting them online"), oilfield-drilling suppliers, insurance companies and agribusiness, with companies like Schlumberger, American International Group (AIG) and Cargill leading the way. Because of the dilapidated state of Iraq's healthcare system, "you'll see US healthcare and pharmaceutical companies coming in there too." Manufacturing for export is another possibility. "I think it would be great if Toyota went there and built automobiles," said Fisher, who has represented the government of China and Mars Inc., one of the world's largest producers of chocolate.

Hoffmann, a former general counsel for the Pentagon who advised Rumsfeld on the US treatment of Al Qaeda detainees, sees a national security imperative in his proposals to use privatization to keep terrorism at bay. Countries in political chaos, he warned, will remain unstable unless they see immediate benefits from their American benefactors. "One of the ways you achieve security in a country like Afghanistan or Iraq is to start economic development really early, and the people get the idea that you're there," he said. He likened his philosophy to the strategic hamlets built by US forces in South Vietnam to relocate peasants from their villages during the US counterinsurgency campaigns of the 1960s. "That was basic economic development," Hoffmann said. "Once that village got itself arranged so it could see it had a future and there was cash in the economy because of the crops they were raising, they wouldn't let the Vietcong come in and ruin their future."

Gabriel Kolko, a historian who has written extensively about Vietnam and US economic policies during the cold war, called Hoffmann's reference to the strategic hamlets "mind-boggling." "These guys in Washington know how to win wars but know nothing about how a peace is won," he said. The Communist victory in Vietnam, Kolko argued, was largely due to the social chaos caused by US policies, and should serve as a lesson for US officials in their attempt to remake Iraq. In his book *Anatomy of a War*, Kolko described the strategic hamlet as "a concentration camp of sorts," where with "sheer brutality," recalcitrant peasants were compelled by South Vietnam's army, sometimes with artillery and aircraft, to seek refuge. But because the hamlets "weren't economically viable," Kolko told me, peasants were forced into the cities, where they were marginalized and forced to work as prostitutes or shoeshine boys. That ultimately caused "a political overload that South Vietnam's leaders couldn't manage," he said. "If the Americans had not mucked around with the social structure, the war might have lasted much longer. The people in the Army didn't have the foggiest notion of what they were doing."

Signing Up to Play

But many companies today seem to believe the opposite about Rumsfeld's military—and are eager to get a first crack at a market under US control. Since the fighting ended, the US-Iraq Business Council has been getting 80–120 calls or e-mails a day expressing interest in investing, said Rubar Sandi, a Kurdish-American investor who came to the United States twenty-eight years ago from Iraq and is the council's chairman.

Sandi has been trying to recruit influential Americans to support the council, including Henry Kissinger (through his global consulting firm, Kissinger said he is "willing to let the council tell him what they're doing, but would certainly not serve" in an advisory position). Recently Sandi made a pitch to the Center for International Private Enterprise, an affiliate of the US Chamber of Commerce that's partially funded by the National Endowment for Democracy, to promote US business practices in developing countries. (Congress created the NED to give money to the chamber, the AFL-CIO and indirectly to the Democratic and Republican parties to support pro-US democratic movements abroad.)

DynCorp International, a military contractor that is organizing law enforcement in Iraq under a contract with the State Department worth at least $50 million, has subcontracted with Sandi's bank to "provide information on housing and different sorts of infrastructure situations in Iraq," a spokesperson for DynCorp's parent, Computer Sciences Corporation, said. Other companies considering joining, council officials said, are Coca-Cola, AIG and Pfizer, the world's largest pharmaceutical manufacturer. Pfizer has another link to Iraq: A senior executive on leave, Emad Dhia, chairs the Pentagon's Iraqi Reconstruction and Redevelopment Council, a group of Iraqi exiles who are to assume key positions in Iraqi ministries (technically, they are employed by Science Applications International, a San Diego–based military contractor—a sign of how far privatization has already gone).

The Center for Democracy, a Washington political rights group that has monitored elections overseas, is headed by Allen Weinstein, who was instrumental in the founding of the NED. He is the council's political adviser, according to the council's website. "Allen has been helpful with relations with Congress and other broader political issues," said Fisher, who serves on the center's board, along with Kissinger, Senator Richard Lugar and other political figures (through his assistant, Weinstein said he has held discussions with the council but denied any formal connection).

Another major player is Thomas Miner, a Chicago business promoter and chairman emeritus of the Mid-America Committee of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, an exclusive group of CEOs from the largest multinationals in the Midwest. He has

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signed on to organize a conference in Chicago for corporations hoping to invest in Iraq. Arnold & Porter, a powerful Washington law firm, is hoping to serve as the council's law firm, according to Dennis Sokol, a New England healthcare executive. Sokol, whose company owns a chain of privately run clinics in Russia and Eastern Europe, has been advising the council about companies to approach for membership. An Arnold & Porter spokesperson would neither confirm nor deny the firm's interest in the council.

Privatization as Panacea

Many who advocate a rapid transition to a free-enterprise system see AID, despite the lucrative contracts it has handed out, as an obstacle. Their criticisms reflect the struggle in the Administration between Colin Powell's State Department, which runs AID and in Iraq and Afghanistan is following the traditional path of government-funded development projects, and the Pentagon, which is pressing AID to adopt what Hoffmann calls an "enterprise-driven, market-economy-directed thrust."

That dispute went public in April, when Newt Gingrich, the former Speaker of the House and a close ally of Rumsfeld, derided AID's rebuilding efforts in Afghanistan as an "absolute failure of American entrepreneurial efforts" that must be avoided in Iraq. Although Gingrich's remarks reportedly irritated President Bush, there is no doubt about the Administration's goals. On May 9, for example, Bush proposed the creation of a US/Middle East free-trade area within ten years. "By replacing corruption and self-dealing with free markets and fair laws, the people of the Middle East will grow in prosperity and freedom," he said.

AID spokesperson Ellen Yount said critics like Hoffmann and Gingrich should "reserve judgment" on AID until they see the agency's economic governance contract, which will guide the Administration's program in Iraq. "We think it will very much reflect an understanding and concern for private-sector development," she said. That contract has been put out for bid, and the company widely expected to win is BearingPoint Inc., a consulting company formerly known as KPMG, which contracted with AID for similar projects in Bosnia and Afghanistan. Patrick Bryski, a managing director at BearingPoint, emphasized in a May 5 speech what he sees as needed in Iraq: "We've got to get assets out of the hands of the government and into the hands of the private sector."

That's exactly what the Treasury Department, which has a team in Baghdad assessing Iraq's financial system, is trying to do. "It's very important to get a good system of rule of law and property rights in a way very conducive to foreign investment," John Taylor, Treasury's Under Secretary for International Affairs, explained at the May 1 conference where Woolsey spoke.

The conference, held at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, was another good indication of the corporate interest in Iraq. It was co-sponsored by AIG and Booz Allen and attended by senior executives from at least sixty-seven companies and law firms, including Babcock International Group, BAE Systems North America, Cummins Power Generation, DynCorp, Goldman Sachs, KBR-Halliburton, Stevedoring Services of America (SSA), the law firm White & Case and two of Japan's largest trading companies.

One of the first targets for private development, Taylor said, will be the UN's oil-for-food program, which before the war was largely run by traders employed by Iraq's central government. "There's got to be large-scale privatization of retail food distribution with the transition," he said. That was of great interest to the transportation companies in the audience, including Menlo Worldwide of California, which is providing logistics services at the port of Umm Qasr and coordinating the US military's efforts to bring in humanitarian aid. Because of the congestion at Iraq's only seaport, Menlo is developing long-term plans to use alternative routes for importing food and other supplies, said a Menlo executive who asked that his name not be used. "We're looking—and this is no secret—at Turkey, Jordan, Kuwait and Bahrain," he said. "Certainly getting in at the ground floor will be a great opportunity."

AID's contract at Umm Qasr with SSA, a Seattle-based port operator, is an example of how US contracts can benefit a company. Under the $4.8 million contract, SSA is preparing the port to handle cargo from ships and tankers. It won the contract over two experienced foreign rivals, England's P&O and Hong Kong's Hutchison Whampoa. "SSA is playing with the big boys now," said Larry Hansen, president of the Seattle local of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, which had bitter disputes with SSA over outsourcing and other issues when West Coast shipping companies locked out the ILWU last summer. Bob Watters, SSA's vice president for the Middle East and Asia, said his company, which took control of the port on May 23 from the British Army, has no plans for a long-term presence in Iraq. "That's totally up to AID," he said. But since SSA does little business in the region, its contract for Iraq will "clearly help it establish a presence in the Middle East," said David Olson, a maritime expert at the University of Washington. Umm Qasr "will become a significant transshipment point for goods on Iraq's north-south routes, and SSA will be the main player," he added.

Bechtel said it will not be directly involved in any privatization projects, which have been a major part of its global business for decades. "Bechtel is phasing out most of its activities in this area," said its chief spokesman, Jonathan Marshall. "I don't see any reason to believe Bechtel would be involved in running or operating facilities."

Wild, and Wide Open

Weeks after the end of the war, Iraq remains in chaos, with armed gangs robbing citizens and stripping government agencies—except for the well-guarded oil ministry—of equipment. Bush recently named L. Paul Bremer, a former managing director of Kissinger Associates and an expert in counterterrorism, to take over the Pentagon's Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance in Iraq. Bremer has put off the formation of an interim government and told Iraqis that the United States will remain in control for an indefinite period. His financial adviser is Peter McPherson, a former Bank of America executive and a close friend of Cheney who ran AID during the Reagan Administration. On May 26 Bremer used Umm Qasr as a backdrop to declare that Iraq was "open for business" and, following Rumsfeld's lead, said he would like to see the "privatization of key elements" of the economy.

But the Administration's zeal for free markets may clash with Iraqi realities. Iraqis have grown accustomed to the benefits of a state-run economy that employed about 30 percent of Iraq's work

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force and provided the population with food rations and low-cost gasoline. Already, international observers are saying that the shock of a sudden shift to a market economy may be difficult for Iraqis to bear, particularly after a harrowing invasion and the subsequent breakdown in civil order. The United States "cannot force an ideological process too much" in Iraq, Ramiro Lopes da Silva, the UN's humanitarian coordinator in Iraq, told the London *Guardian* on May 27. Pointing to the recent US decision to release 400,000 Iraqi soldiers without a re-employment program, the Portuguese diplomat warned of the potential for further instability and "a low-intensity conflict" if Bremer—who also approved layoffs of more than 100,000 civil servants—continues these policies.

Congress is also watching closely. During a contentious Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on May 22, lawmakers repeatedly criticized Wolfowitz for the dismal US performance in postwar Iraq. "The planning for peace was much less developed than the planning for war," said committee chair Lugar, who called the Administration's stabilization and reconstruction efforts "inadequate." Senator Joseph Lieberman and Representative Henry Waxman, both Democrats, are demanding inquiries into the Administration's secretive contracting practices.

But it's going to take more than Congressional oversight to insure that Iraqi citizens—and not Rumsfeld and his business and political cronies—determine Iraq's future. Some US labor groups that opposed the war, for example, are investigating whether SSA, MCI and other US corporations doing business in Iraq are respecting UN-recognized labor rights. Now that the fighting's over, corporations may be having their way. But out of the gloom, a new activist agenda may emerge that combines opposition to Bush's foreign policy with earlier, but still relevant, concerns about the social consequences of corporate-led globalization. Perhaps the battle of Baghdad has just begun. ■

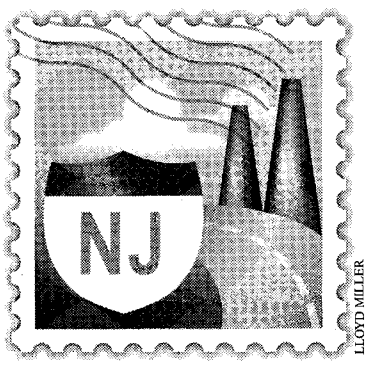
NEW JERSEY: A VEGETABLE PATCH AND SPARE BEDROOM FOR THE BIG CITIES ON EITHER SIDE.

On Mediocrity's Cutting Edge

LUC SANTE

THESE UNITED STATES

In the 1920s The Nation *published a series of articles by prominent writers about their home states. We have commissioned a number of contemporary writers to do the same. This is the third in the series.* —*The Editors*



LLOYD MILLER

New Jersey, a smallish state with an insistent, almost typographical shape—an ampersand—has for three centuries had the mingled good and bad luck to be the neutral conjunction between New York City and Philadelphia. If it were a country it would be a sort of Belgium, constantly run over by armies surging or retreating from one center of power to the other. Instead it became a domestic colony, employed as vegetable patch, factory lot, depot, dumping ground and eventually spare bedroom for the great cities on either side. Its nickname, "The Garden State," is a nice way of acknowledging this servile condition. It doesn't grow much for the market anymore anyway; agribusiness probably has single-crop spreads in Texas that are bigger. The only two significant rural regions left in the state are the pie-slice of the Appalachian Range in the extreme northwest and the ineffable Pine Barrens in the south, both of them saved from subdivision by their topographical inhospitality. The rest is mostly suburb.

It does have cities, almost all of them beset, aggrieved, half-ruined, embodying the idea of city in the sense of demographic density but not in that of power, prosperity or even pleasures of the flesh. Most arrived at this condition as industry tumbled in the latter half of the past century; earlier they had been hard-edged, unglamorous communities of strivers. Newark, Jersey City, Elizabeth, Bayonne, Paterson, Camden, Trenton. The first has had some intermittent fleeting success in positioning itself as a subsidiary Gotham; the second has become a catch basin for lower-Manhattan overflow. They also retain their share of misery, however, and misery is most of what you find in the other cities, not excepting the state capital. If the American middle class continues to expand its numbers and stomach, it will eventually find a way of refashioning and inhabiting former factory cities, but for the time being they are useless except for housing the poor, badly. They have inferior building stock, vast and unrecyclable vacated plants, empty lots of poisoned soil, populations that have never recovered from the loss of security—if, indeed, they ever knew such a thing. Seemingly everyone who can do so has bolted to the suburbs, which lie all around, just beyond the highway belt. Oh, and there is also Atlantic City, in which a froth of imitation high life sits atop a heap of misery. The misery is real enough, but the casino fringe is less a place than a drug or a manic episode. It is a feeble knockoff of Vegas, which is itself a three-dimensional metaphor you can almost put your arm through. Atlantic City is tethered to New Jersey, but it really seems to drift five miles offshore.

The predominant look of New Jersey these days is pale if not pastel, ostensibly cheerful. ornamented with gratuitous knobs and fanlights, manufactured in such a way that clapboard is indistinguishable from fiberglass—the happy meeting of postmodernism and heritage-themed zoning codes. A couple of decades ago the latter asserted themselves in the state by coating

Luc Sante immigrated to New Jersey from Belgium as a child. His books include Low Life, The Factory of Facts *(both Vintage) and* Evidence *(Noonday). He lives in Ulster County, New York.*

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diners in ersatz brickface and carriage lamps, the former by turning out dry-cleaning establishments and ten thousand bars with plural names (Mumbles, Fumbles, Stumbles) that were apparently made of beaverboard and aluminum and featured French-mansardish roof extensions that all but scraped the ground. But that was adolescence. Now, with maturity, the suburban style of New Jersey has attained a purposeful, militant blandness, the kind you associate with plainclothes security personnel at Disney parks. The "welcome" signs, artfully disposed, make it clear that hospitality is merely an allusive flavor; they are in no wise meant to be taken literally. The past, similarly, is a reference without a referent—all you need to know is that some humans, now dead, invented the principles of quaintness. And nature is a commodity that, while valuable, is yet in a primitive state of development. It will be a better thing all around when bioengineering has refined the landscape so that people no longer need to coax proper behavior from its component parts. Someday you will be able to unscrew your trees, rotate your hedges and shampoo your lawn.

New Jersey has long served as a laboratory for testing upgrades and streamlinings of middle-class life.

Such suburban commonplaces exist across the nation, of course, but as potent as they may be in California, say, that state also has mountains and deserts, extremes of weather, remote settlements at the ends of roads. New Jersey, with its accommodating temperate flatness and closeness of scale, was virtually designed to be a suburb. Accommodation was the operative quality. The elements rolled out the carpet for exploitation in the first place, and then successive generations of rural aldermen and freeholders happily submitted their townships to the shredder. They traded their placid neighborly four-corners and pastoral outlands to the shopping-mall and condo-complex bulldozers in exchange for golfing vacations in Bermuda. But what self-preserving trustee wouldn't do the same? New Jersey has always been all about location; North Dakotans can only gnash their teeth in envy. And people have to live somewhere, don't they, there being so many more of them than there were yesterday. Among the numerous consequences of such accommodation is the eradication of historical identity. This tract-house suburb began life as a utopian agricultural commune, that one as a religious sect's earthly fortress; today the only evidence of these origins resides on the unvisited shelves of the local historical society. Of course, the way such origins have been turned into tourism fodder in places where the architectural heritage is more abundant suggests that the loss may not be so great after all.

Bereft of history, though—and, yes, New Jersey does boast of a dozen George Washington sites, as well as the more apposite traces of Thomas Edison—the state's identity is pretty thin. Like a Belgium, New Jersey has long been the butt of jokes and complaints, a convenient kick-me for its more powerful neighbors. Hoboken and Ho-Ho-Kus, or at least their names, have served as the mythic Nowheresville in urban smart talk for generations. The state's name was shorthand for "soulless commuter dump" back when Long Island was still overwhelmingly rural. And the Jersey driver remains a prominent folk devil all over the Northeast: bumptious, heedless, hostile and barely competent. The epithets chart a subtle change in perception of the state, from dull, square outland to parking lot for middle-class transients. The New Jerseyan is generally seen as the embodiment of upwardly mobile rootlessness and material self-satisfaction. He or she may have grown up in Oklahoma or Idaho, or even abroad, but has shed every trace of accent and custom somewhere on the climb, and now marks time in a factory-fresh jumbo house made of two-by-fours and gypsum and Tyvek and filled with gadgetry, on a street with no sidewalks and planted with saplings, while awaiting a corporate transfer to some interchangeable burg on the other coast. Whole swaths of the state are held together only by school sports and property-tax outrage. If you parachute into one of these places without a global positioning device you will be more lost than if you landed on the steppes.

It remains true that if you navigate around the gated communities and behind the corporate campuses, you will come upon remnants of a former New Jersey. There are still tomato fields and cranberry bogs here and there, and old Italians babying their backyard fig trees in urban neighborhoods that have so far managed to avoid detection by the hip dollar and its agents. There are still rogue bars, many of them along highways demoted by the Interstate System, and now and then you'll see a local diner that is still primarily made of sheet metal and caters to a clientele constitutionally similar to the one it served forty years ago. There are still factories in the state, with attendant industrial housing precincts, even if every year more of them are admitted to the ranks of the dead. The Pine Barrens continue their mysterious ways, and down there you can still shoot skeet behind somebody's barn and canoe down swampish rivers far from any road. Immigrant communities, some of them new, maintain their churches and groceries in obscure byways on the fringes of cities. It is also true that the curvilinear streets of neosuburbs can shelter the most unlikely assemblages of citizens behind the apparent uniformity of their extruded facades. Some places, after all, readily admit that they are but containing vessels; as long as the inhabitants keep their doors shut and their lawns manicured they are free to worship shrubs and paint themselves blue if that's what floats their boat.

New Jersey, a conveniently flat and temperate piece of real estate situated between two great cities, one of them possessing capital-of-the-world pretensions, has long served as a laboratory for testing upgrades and streamlinings of middle-class life. The success of these innovations has assured their application around the country and in the more prosperous countries in the rest of the world. It is thus possible to see the spirit of New Jersey in a great many places as you travel. When you come upon a grouping of large tract houses, or of low-rise apartments masquerading as large tract houses, that is heralded by a signboard bearing a title ("Lark's Crest Estates"; "The Village at Hunter's Ridge"), you are seeing New Jersey, even if you happen to be in Colorado. When you enter a venerable rustic inn that has lately come under new management, and notice that the reproduction antiques in the foyer are labeled with instructions for purchasing duplicates, and that the desk personnel sport matching blazers, hands-free telephone headsets and friendly

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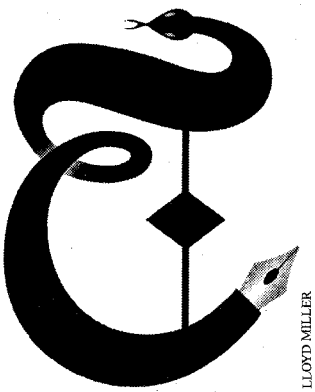
smiles under impenetrably dead eyes, you have come into New Jersey, even if the hostelry is situated in Europe. When you opt for the latest technological innovation, the biggest car, the smallest portable device, the most all-encompassing home entertainment system, not from any specific need but simply because you want the best, you yourself have become a New Jerseyan, even if you have never set foot in that state. It is not so much that any of these modes of living or conducting business was necessarily pioneered in New Jersey itself—California does have a lot to answer for—but that no state is as exemplified and ruled by them. New Jersey, an old state with many fascinating historical byways and a considerable fund of lore and legend, is the image of the future, assuming that the future is assigned a value of perhaps fifteen minutes. ■

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PENTAGON OBJECTIVES AND JOURNALISTS' NEEDS COINCIDE.

'Scoops' and Truth at the *Times*

RUSS BAKER

Who's the exact opposite of Jayson Blair, the *New York Times* reporter accused of inventing sources and quotes, plagiarizing and other sins? Well, how about Judith Miller? Where Blair is young and black and inexperienced, a rookie journalist whose job was largely to interview ordinary people, Miller is middle-aged and white and a veteran *Times* star whose job it is to interact with the best and the brightest in science, academia and government.



LLOYD MILLER

But Blair and Miller have more in common than you might think. Both are in trouble for giving readers dubious information. While Miller's alleged improprieties are of a more subtle nature, and she comes into this rough patch with an estimable reputation built over the course of a long and distinguished career, her case reveals a great deal about the state of today's news media. What Miller did, and the fact that her brand of journalism is encouraged and rewarded by the powers that be, is precisely the kind of topic that the *Times*'s leadership ought to air during its current semipublic *glasnost* phase. In Blair's case, the only serious damage has been to the paper's image. Miller, on the other hand, risks playing with the kind of fire that starts or justifies wars, gets people killed and plays into the hands of government officials with partisan axes to grind.

Every morning, almost every other source of news looks to see what the *Times* does, then follows its lead. On the morning of April 21, in a front-page story from Iraq, Miller suggested that the main reason US forces had failed to find the much-ballyhooed Weapons of Mass Destruction—the ostensible primary reason for the invasion—was that they had been recently destroyed or existed only as precursors with dual, civilian uses. Her source? A man standing off in the distance wearing a baseball cap, who military sources told her was an Iraqi scientist who had told them those things. In the same piece, she floated unsupported claims alleging that Iraq had provided WMD aid to Syria and Al Qaeda. In so doing, she put the *Times*'s imprimatur on a highly questionable formulation that was also essential to White House political interests.

In response to questions to Miller, her editor, Andrew Rosenthal, told *The Nation* via e-mail that the article "made clear that Judy Miller was aware of his identity and in fact met him, but was asked to withhold his name out of concern for his personal safety." Yet the article does not bear that out. It says military officials "declined to identify him," that she was only permitted to view him from a distance and that she was not allowed to interview him but merely permitted to view a letter ostensibly written by the man, in Arabic. "What's surprising and I think disappointing is that the *New York Times*, not just Judith Miller, chose to take at face value the initial assessments of a US investigations team that certainly has a vested interest in finding WMD in Iraq," says Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association. The *New York Observer* spoke with sources at the Gray Lady who indicated widespread grumbling about the piece; one source called it "wacky-assed."

But it was more than that: Miller and the *Times* consented to prepublication approval of her piece by the military. "Those officials asked that details of what chemicals were uncovered be deleted," Miller wrote. "They said they feared that such information could jeopardize the scientist's safety by identifying the part of the weapons program where he worked." (Why his safety would be in question with Saddam vanquished was not explained.)

The April 21 story was one of a series of pieces on WMD in Iraq filed by Miller that relied heavily on unnamed sources and Pentagon officials. The question of how close Miller may have come to serving as a vehicle for Administration views was raised by *Washington Post* reporter Howard Kurtz in a May 26 story. He quoted an internal e-mail by Miller in which she said that the main source for her articles on Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction was Ahmad Chalabi, an exile leader who is close to top Pentagon officials. In the e-mail, to *Times* Baghdad bureau chief John Burns, Miller said of Chalabi: "He has provided most of the front page exclusives on WMD to our paper." As Kurtz noted, "According to the *New Yorker*'s Seymour Hersh, Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress was a key source of information about weapons for the Pentagon's own intelligence unit—information sometimes disputed by the CIA. Chalabi may have been feeding the *Times*, and other news organizations, the same disputed information."

"Chalabi has NEVER been an unnamed source of mine,"

Russ Baker writes frequently for The Nation. *He can be reached at russ@russbaker.com. Research assistance by Petra Bartosiewicz.*

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Miller told *The Nation* in an e-mail. "He has ALWAYS been named. Every time. This is one of several gross errors in Kurtz's story." Miller did not identify those errors. It's notable that Miller's comments about Chalabi don't jibe with what she told Burns in her e-mail to him. Chalabi is named or quoted in sixteen Miller articles over the past year, mostly on political topics, but in only one of those is he mentioned, even remotely, in connection with WMDs—and then only to note that he and US military investigators might be exchanging intelligence information. If he were the *New York Times*'s key supplier of exclusives on that subject and, as Miller claims, was not used as an unattributed source, his name should appear in those articles. Rosenthal did not comment on the Chalabi memo beyond saying Kurtz should not have published it.

Probably the most instructive exercise in assessing Miller's reporting is to compare her with the *Post*'s Barton Gellman. You would think the two were in different countries, if not on different planets. After Miller's "baseball cap" piece appeared, Gellman wrote an article that politely dismissed her scoop: "Without further details of the find, experts said, its significance cannot be assessed." Here are typical Miller headlines from May:

May 21: "U.S. Analysts Link Iraq Labs to Germ Arms"

May 12: "Radioactive Material Found at a Test Site Near Baghdad"

May 11: "Trailer Is a Mobile Lab Capable of Turning Out Bioweapons, a Team Says"

May 9: "G.I.'s Search, Not Alone, In the Cellar of Secrets"

May 8: "U.S. Aides Say Iraqi Truck Could Be a Germ-War Lab"

Now Gellman:

May 18: "Odyssey of Frustration; In Search for Weapons, Army Team Finds Vacuum Cleaners"

May 11: "Frustrated, U.S. Arms Team to Leave Iraq; Task Force Unable to Find Any Weapons"

May 10: "Seven Nuclear Sites Looted; Iraqi Scientific Files, Some Containers Missing"

May 4: "Iraqi Nuclear Site Is Found Looted; U.S. Team Unable to Determine Whether Deadly Materials Are Missing"

To be sure, Gellman's record isn't without blemishes, but he seems to have realized early on that tying his fortunes to the military's not-always-reliable sources wasn't wise. The thrust of Gellman's reporting in recent months, and his central theme, has been that no one has confirmed that Iraq actually manufactured or retained biological or chemical weapons after the last ones accounted for by UN inspectors in 1998. Miller, by contrast, either downplays this point or doesn't highlight it sufficiently.

Miller's reporting on WMD follows a pattern established with her articles on the anthrax attacks of October 2001 [see Michael Massing, "Where Germs Rule," December 17, 2001]. The Bush Administration quickly labeled the attacks "terrorism," without being more explicit, but Miller weighed in with a co-bylined front-pager, labeled "news analysis," that implied Al Qaeda might be responsible. She wrote that according to one scientist, the discovery of expertly processed anthrax "casts serious doubt" on the theory that the attacks were the work of a lone amateur. "'I do think in one form or another, a state was involved,' one former American scientist said.... *Nor is it clear whether Al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden's network, was involved in any way. American intelligence officials say Mr. bin Laden has tried to acquire nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.*" [Emphasis added.]

After the *Post* reported that it seemed to be the work of a "lone amateur" after all, Miller simply dropped the matter. On the same day that the *Post* was excising the foreign connection, Miller was back with more Osama in a co-bylined story headlined "Al Qaeda Sites Point to Tests of Chemicals," with the subhead "U.S. Suspects Bin Laden of Producing Mass Poison; U.S. Intelligence Pointed Out Two Afghan Locations Where Chemical Warfare May Be in the Making." The article itself contained numerous disclaimers about the suspected connection: "Collecting intelligence about facilities of this sort is an inexact science at best; intelligence officials and policy makers have learned from past mistakes to be wary when using such information."

In September 2002, a year after the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks, Miller had yet another Osama scoop provided by the authorities. Headlined "Lab Suggests Qaeda Planned to Build Arms, Officials Say," the article begins: "Pentagon officials disclosed new details today about equipment found in a laboratory near Kandahar, Afghanistan, that they contend Al Qaeda intended to use to make biological and chemical weapons."

Is this a real story? The headline and lead are powerful. But here's the second paragraph: "The officials said the equipment—a centrifuge for separating liquids and an oven in which slurried agents could be dried—supported the assessment that Al Qaeda might have acquired what it needed to make 'a very limited production of biological and chemical agents,' one official said."

Each time Miller produces an article that could induce panic, she almost always mentions, some paragraphs down, that Al Qaeda's capability to deploy or develop these types of weapons has been judged by the Bush Administration to be crude at best. But the effect remains the same. Miller gets a story with a whopper of a headline, the story gets picked up and it connects with the American zeitgeist in support of extreme measures by the Administration domestically (Patriot Act) and internationally (invade Iraq), with few reading down to where Miller deflates the balloon and thereby preserves her credibility, in the same way that politicians leak and spin while preserving their deniability.

How did Miller get to a position in which she could write such stories and her editors give them such play? Part of the answer is journalism's star system. Out of the hundreds of thousands of journalists in America, just a handful enter the firmament of media stars, and Miller is one of them. Concentrating on the area of germ and chemical weapons, she mastered the complicated subject and racked up a score of successes, becoming part of a team that won a Pulitzer Prize for the *Times* and co-writing a formidable though somewhat flawed bestselling book on the subject. She became ubiquitous, appearing frequently on television.

Because reporters at these levels get unparalleled access to high-level sources, they are uniquely positioned to publish information that powerfully impacts government policy, public perceptions and even life on earth. By the same token, high-level sources use these journalists to selectively make public material that is helpful to their agenda. "The reporting is indispensable, because such journalists are able to win interviews and obtain documents that others cannot," says Steven Aftergood, director of the Federation of American Scientists' project on government secrecy. "It is unreliable for the same reason—it cannot be independently con-

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firmed. And over time, it tends to adhere to a certain narrow model of perception and a certain uniform way of thinking."

Of course, these reporters don't act alone. Their market-driven editors are complicit, ready to hype what is often little more than tendentious hearsay in order to present front-page scoops. Aside from attracting readers, such reporting—when it's on topics of interest to the Bush White House—can immunize news organizations against the persistent right-wing canard that they are liberal patsies. It's safe to conclude that few people at high levels will risk their jobs—and perhaps jail time—to leak unauthorized material. Hence, what's given to reporters like Miller can generally be assumed to be carefully orchestrated. The leakers know that her reporting will play big. Rosenthal argues that all sources have agendas, and notes that "whenever possible, the reporter should help the reader understand these [sources'] motivations. Judy has done this consistently in her coverage of the WMD issue."

A Miller appearance with CNBC's Brian Williams during the pre-invasion propaganda campaign shows how the game is played. Here's the intro:

> Page one in this morning's *New York Times*. a report by Judith Miller that Iraq has ordered a million doses of an anti-germ warfare antidote. The assumption here is that Iraq is preparing to use such weapons....
>
> WILLIAMS: Iraq's attempt to buy large quantities of the antidote in question was first reported by veteran *New York Times* correspondent and Pulitzer Prize winner Judith Miller in this morning's edition of the newspaper. She is also, by the way, author of the recent book on terrorism called *Germs: Biological Weapons and America's Secret War*. And she is with us from the *Times* newsroom in New York tonight.

Miller then explains that "what worried people" was that although the drug in question has civilian uses, it's unlikely that Saddam would order a million doses for benign purposes. "That really got heads up in Washington," she tells Williams. The anchor asks her if the "Western assumption" is that Saddam is planning to protect his military with the antidote. "Right, exactly," she replies. Consider: The highest priority of the Bush Administration was to persuade the world that Saddam Hussein constituted a grave threat. It found indications of that threat and gave them to Miller, who rushed to break the story.

Jayson Blair used the cover of unidentified sources to make things up. Miller allows sources to hide their identities in order to advance a self-serving agenda. Using unnamed sources is a common and necessary technique in journalism. But sources should not be allowed to remain unnamed when the information they are imparting serves to directly advance their own and their employers' objectives. In other words, a reporter needs a very good justification for not naming a source—usually because a source is saying something that could get him or her in big trouble with some powerful entity. But what kind of trouble could befall some unnamed Pentagon source who is leaking material in accord with the objectives of the current Administration? The principal motive for remaining under cover in such circumstances, besides preserving deniability, is to gain greater currency for the leaked material, as something that has received the imprimatur of our internationally recognized "newspaper of record," the *New York Times*.

If the *Times* is serious about reform, it needs to stop looking just at troublesome cases like Jayson Blair and to examine its star system and its desire to break news, beat the competition and all the while stay in the good graces of top officials. Good journalism is about a lot more than taking advantage of connections and access. It requires going wherever the reporting takes you. Even if that means the story ends up not on the front page but on the spike. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

the 1960s and '70s. Our hunger for belonging to an agency of righteous change did not keep us free from dishonesty, disassociation or self-delusion. And now both the military and the peace movement have evolved—the military more consciously devoted to and dependent on ignorance, distance and cynicism; the peace movement more devoted to and dependent on information, self-awareness and connection.

JUDITH ANGELO

Sarasota, Fla.

■ Chris Hedges expresses with excruciating eloquence what I have long known to be essential truth. I simply sat out the war, refusing to watch TV coverage or even to read detailed accounts. Children are lured into military service with promises of vocational training, bright futures, eternal benefits, being all that they can be, without a hint that they are being recruited as hit men (and women). If "all that they can be" turns out to be "dead," well, then, the American Legion will be there on every holiday to extol them for having died "in defense of their country." So far as I am aware, the last American to die in what might be truthfully called defense of his country did so in 1945. Those who have perished since have done so in defense of the agendas of lying politicians. My local newspaper recently carried a huge piece on the new war toys being cooked up by Hasbro et al. for the Christmas season (their collections never seem to feature little paraplegic GI Joes in wheelchairs). Lest anyone had a doubt, we are going to keep teaching our children that war is fun.

EDNA MCALEXANDER

TOP GUN MEETS LENI?

Silver Spring, Md.

■ Did anyone notice the similarity between George W. Bush's carefully staged photo-op landing on the aircraft carrier and Leni Riefenstahl's 1935 film *Triumph of the Will*? In the film we see a Junkers 52 trimotor emerge from the clouds into the sunlight and land gracefully at Nuremberg airport. Out steps a man with a small mustache in a snappy uniform. He motorcades through a staged cheering throng and arrives at a grand outdoor stadium. Thousands of soldiers in steel helmets stand at attention facing a stage adorned with great banners bearing the *Hakenkreuz* (hooked cross), the swastika.

EDD DOERR

South Bend, Ind.

■ In the spirit of your classic cover "Worry," I suggest a rendering of George W. landing on the Lincoln decked out in full flight suit. Caption: "Top Goon!" I'd certainly buy the T-shirt.

MIKE KEEN

CLARIFICATIONS & CORRECTIONS

■ In our June 9 editorial "Losing Iraq?" George W. Bush's proclamation of Al Qaeda as "not a problem anymore" was a reference to top Al Qaeda operatives, not the entire organization.

In David Cole's June 9 "Guantánamo Gulag," the last sentence of the first paragraph should have read "...why have thirty-six now been allowed to go free?"

In the May 12 issue, author John Berger's bio should have given the title of his recent book as *The Shape of a Pocket*.

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 5)

to settle this issue of who will control our media and for what purposes, and to resolve it in favor of public airwaves of, by and for the people of this great country." That's a chance America can't afford to miss. JOHN NICHOLS AND ROBERT W. MCCHESNEY

John Nichols and Robert W. McChesney are the authors of Our Media, Not Theirs: The Democratic Struggle Against Corporate Media *(Seven Stories).*

Baiting the French

George W. Bush may have intoned "*Vive la France*" to a reporter from *Le Figaro* and other foreign journalists just before he took off for his dismissively quick drop-in at the G-8 meeting in Évian—but it's unlikely that will be taken as a signal by his cohorts to cease peddling anti-French stories to journalists with a skepticism deficit.

A month after Colin Powell, in April, solemnly affirmed that France would be "punished" for its opposition to Bush's war, the *New York Times* reported that "a midlevel meeting in the White House was called to discuss ways to do so." Just by happenstance, of course, that meeting coincided with a marked ratcheting-up of nasty media stories accusing Jacques Chirac's government of being in bed with Saddam Hussein.

In an unprecedented May 15 letter to the United States, Jean-David Levitte, France's US Ambassador, denounced a "disinformation campaign aimed at sullying France's image and misleading the public." Levitte cited and refuted eight stories he called "false," all of which "rely on information from 'anonymous administration officials.'" Examples: The *New York Times* published a story saying high-precision switches used in nukes had been sold by France to Iraq; it turned out the sale by a private company of the switches, which were dual-use and had been requested as medical equipment, was barred by the French government when it figured out the deception. *Newsweek* published a blind item suggesting French Roland 2 missiles made in 2002 had been found in Iraq; it turned out that no Roland 2s were manufactured after 1993, and that France had sold no weaponry to Iraq since 1990.

But no story proved as incendiary as a May 6 report by Bill Gertz in the ultraconservative, Moonie-owned *Washington Times*—based on "anonymous intelligence sources"—alleging that France had provided passports to "an unknown number" of Saddam's henchmen to help them escape to Europe as the Baath regime collapsed. The frogbaiting frothers on Fox News and other nets railed about this no-names report for weeks; it became a staple of right-wing talk-radio's virulently anti-French spewing and fodder for late-night TV comics. Dennis Miller, *chez* Jay Leno, launched into a five-minute riff using the passport story for a broadside against the French, "who never take baths." About the only TV talking head who came to France's defense was Bill Press, who said on CNBC that the passport story and similar tales "are coming out of the same little intelligence cell at the Pentagon that told us that Saddam Hussein was responsible for 9/11 and that there were tons and tons of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq."

The passport story sparked a call for an investigation by House Judiciary Committee chairman James Sensenbrenner—to which the Department of Homeland Security responded two weeks later that according to US intelligence, there was "no indication that France supplied passports to Iraqis." The *Washington Post*'s Karen DeYoung reported May 15 that the White House, the State Department and the CIA all said they were "aware of no such intelligence information." And the story was categorically denounced as false by Dominique de Villepin, France's foreign minister.

But that didn't stop the Pentagon's leakers, who, speaking "on the condition of anonymity," fed the *Washington Times* a May 24 story saying that "a U.S. military intelligence team" in Iraq had "uncovered" a dozen blank French passports—where and when was never specified. In this story, Gertz went to great lengths to suggest that the passports could not have been stolen, because the "French Embassy was protected by armed guards and barbed wire...after the fall of Baghdad." (France has no formal embassy in Iraq, only an "interest section." However, a French spokesman in Washington says passports were burgled from a prefecture in France some months ago; the culprits remain unidentified.)

When I asked Gertz about his story, which was written from Washington, he admitted that no one he'd talked to had actually seen the "uncovered" blank passports, and that he was relying entirely on a Pentagon-leaked "field report," which he hadn't seen either. Not one of the hundreds of foreign journalists on the ground in Iraq has confirmed the Moonie paper's claim. If there are any passports, and if they're real and not forgeries, their serial numbers should make them easy to trace. Yet so far, the Administration has not responded to France's request, in the wake of the *Washington Times* story, for a look at them. Which makes Bush's declarations to the French press about how he "appreciates" the close cooperation between US and French intelligence services rather empty.

Now Chirac, France's president, is a notorious liar and crook. Last year, while voters renewed his immunity from probable indictment by re-electing him, his puppet character on the popular TV show *Les Guignols* was baptized Supermenteur (Superliar), a name that stuck. Yet it's hard to imagine what could have motivated Chirac's government to help senior Baathist thugs escape under French protection. Even before the passport story, the US boycott campaigns against French products were already of major concern to corporate France, Chirac's fervent supporters. And Chirac was being criticized by other elements of his conservative coalition for having gone too far in his confrontation with Washington. So why would Chirac chance making the situation worse? On its face, the story is illogical.

It's hard to prove a negative, so I asked some of Chirac's most ardent French critics what they thought of his alleged collusion with the Baghdad dictatorship; if they can't find the passport story, it probably isn't there. "For years France—under both left and right governments—was silent on Saddam's ethnic cleansing and human rights violations and had a bad reputation for it, which was deserved," says Alain Frachon, deputy editor of *Le Monde*, the leading daily, noted for its antipathy to Chirac. But, he said, in the past ten years France's involvement with Iraq has "continually diminished. Last year, for example, there was only $600 million in French trade with Iraq—that's small change, really." As for the

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passport story, "I don't believe it," Frachon said. "When Saddam's son Uday secretly sought French treatment after he was hit by thirty bullets in an assassination attempt, we knew about it right away. But we have no indication" the passport story is true.

Claude Angeli, dean of French investigative journalists and veteran editor of the satirical weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné* (which has broken more Chirac scandals than the rest of the press combined), says the fact that de Villepin—Chirac's chief of staff before he became foreign minister—personally stepped up to deny the passport story tells us a lot. De Villepin, after years in Chirac's shadow, has a new-found public popularity as France's spokesman against the war and "now sees himself as a future prime minister or president," Angeli told me. De Villepin "would never have denied [the passport story] if it happened, because it would be too risky," not just for Chirac but for his own political future.

Jean Guisnel authoritatively covers military and intelligence matters for the center-right newsweekly *Le Point*. On the passport story, Guisnel is categorical: "My military and intelligence sources all tell me it's absolutely not true."

In his May 25 *Washington Post* column, that paper's ombudsman, Michael Getler, cited the French-baiting episode in his critique of major stories based on anonymous sources and politicized intelligence, concluding that "reporters aren't probing hard enough against the defenses of an administration with an effective, disciplined, and restrictive attitude toward information control." In other words, most of the US press is falling down in exposing the White House use of the Big Lie technique—or, worse, is a willing partner in it.

While Bush, when asked in an interview with France3 TV if he'd forgive France for its antiwar stance, casually responded "Sure," he was being disingenuous. As CNN White House correspondent John King put it during the Évian summit, "Bush's aides say he'll never forget." The *Washington Times*, favorite paper of the White House, promises another installment on the passport story "soon."

DOUG IRELAND

Doug Ireland, who lived in France for a decade, is a longtime Nation *contributor.*

Globalization and GMOs

With the end of the Iraq war, the globalization war is heating up around trade again, this time over the issue of genetically modified food. George W. Bush is once more attacking "Old Europe," claiming that it is denying food to starving Africans, after several African countries declined US aid in the form of genetically modified food out of concern that it might taint their own crops, thus making them unsalable in Europe. And once again the United States is opposing a United Nations approach, this time in the form of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, signed by more than 100 nations, which establishes rules to regulate GMOs.

Bush's trade representative, Robert Zoellick, has lodged a formal complaint with the World Trade Organization (WTO) against European policies that favor GMO consumer labeling. Zoellick says he is out of patience with those picky European eaters who spread unfounded fears in the developing world about GMOs. Will America's independent farmers and consumers be the next to be smeared as "soft on the French"? Not likely, when the question is the right to know what's in the food you eat.

The debate over corporate globalization prompted a June 1 protest by thousands around the G-8 meetings in Évian, France. That debate will grow louder June 23–25 in Sacramento at a US-sponsored extravaganza promoting biotechnology and the US corporate agenda in advance of fall WTO meetings in Cancún, Mexico, and of officials' negotiating the FTAA—an extension of NAFTA to Latin America—in Miami. The invitees to Sacramento are trade and agriculture ministers from 180 countries. Critics of corporate dominance of world agriculture will fight for inclusion in the closed official sessions while protesting on the outside.

US officials were stung by sharp criticism at the June 2002 UN meeting in Rome, which called for cutting the number of the world's hungry in half by 2015, from some 800 million to 400 million. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan wants to double aid to poor nations, but the United States is failing to do its part, committing just 0.13 percent of its gross national product, one-third the level of Europe's contribution. In addition, the Bush Administration insists that aid recipients accept deregulation and privatization and import GMO food from American farmers and corporations.

"For better or worse, we were right," is the cryptic summary of US Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman of the past decade's attempts to force GMOs into the marketplace without consumer labeling or adequate testing. At the California state agricultural agency, which Veneman ran before becoming Bush's point person on biotechnology, there is still only one staff position to review 350 applications for biotech projects every year.

Veneman, who is hosting the Sacramento conference, is a former director of Calgene (swallowed by Monsanto and now part of Pharmacia), the biotech company that heralded the world's first genetically altered food, the Flavr Savr tomato. By removing a gene "that hastens the breakdown of tomato flesh," Calgene promised chemical ripening that would make the flavor last all the way to distant shelves. But then anti-biotech activist Jeremy Rifkin mobilized public opinion, Campbell Soup pulled out of an agreement to use the tomatoes and the Flavr Savr was abandoned.

Like Zoellick, the industry blames consumers for falling for what lobbyists call "environmental technophobia." US corn exporters like Monsanto claim to lose $300 million annually because of Europe's resistance to unlabeled GMOs. But the "phobia" grows from the logical suspicion that an industry opposed to labels must have something to hide. Otherwise, why deny consumers a right to informed choice in the marketplace?

In addition to opposing labeling, Veneman is campaigning against any acceptance of the "precautionary principle" by international bodies. The precautionary principle, once endorsed by Bush's recently departed environmental czar, Christine Whitman, allows countries to regulate pesticides and GMOs on the basis of "better safe than sorry" risk assessments. The principle, embodied in California's Proposition 65, adopted in 1986, shifts the burden of proof to corporations for proving that a given chemical is not a carcinogen.

As one current example of the dangers of unregulated biotech-

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COMMENT

nology, federal officials are nearing approval of a transgenic species of Atlantic salmon spliced with hormones to make it grow five times faster than normal. (Others have antifreeze genes thrown in to allow them to abide icy ocean water.) That project raises outraged cries from commercial fishermen, who believe the larger Frankenfish will decimate wild species of salmon with their precious genetic inheritance, which has evolved over millennia. Not to miss a buck in the novelty market, there are even plans to create glow-in-the-dark fish and koi that change colors.

Despite the Flavr Savr failure and the Frankenfish scare, the US corporate prescriptions might be taken more seriously if the United States were a model of food security. But 36 million Americans lack enough food, mainly because of poverty.

Food First's Anuradha Mittal, a lead critic of the Sacramento biotech event, reminds her audiences that the so-called Green Revolution of the 1970s and '80s may have increased food production but did not reduce the number of starving people if the figures exclude China, which reduced hunger, Mittal said, primarily through state-sponsored land reforms. In some villages in her native India, she says, every farmer has sold a kidney to feed his family, and some, in despair, commit suicide by consuming the pesticides they were told to use on their fields. Mittal is equally cynical about a corporate biotech revolution. The state of Punjab, she laments, produces pet food for Europe and the state of Haryana grows tulips for export to pay off international debts instead of building local agriculture.

Some of the strongest opposition in Sacramento will be from the global South, the very countries the biotech advocates claim to be saving. While some organizations are willing to bow to even more deregulation in exchange for trade niches, the growing consensus among most Southern advocates is that attempts to push GMOs as a condition of food aid (or HIV assistance) should be resisted and any expansion of WTO control prevented. A counterforce to the "Washington consensus" is springing up, especially in Latin America, where 44 percent live in poverty and the number of unemployed workers has doubled in ten years. In Brazil, the million members of the Landless Workers Movement grow their own food—using the precautionary principle—while occupying land in a tacit alliance with the new president, Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva. Their example is spreading.

The fight over GMO food is a major part of the battle against US efforts to dictate policy on all aspects of international trade and development. Does the United States have the power to impose trade terms favorable to itself on thirty-four Latin American countries with 800 million people, producing more than $11 trillion in goods and services? That is what will be debated in Sacramento and fought out in Cancún and Miami. Get ready: The empire is being renegotiated.

TOM HAYDEN

Tom Hayden is the Nation Institute's Carey McWilliams Fellow.

Ground Zero

(Continued From Page 6)

exist must be created. It seems unlikely—unless and until another war is launched—that serial mass demonstrations will continue. Demonstrations are well suited to sharply defined objectives, not to broad goals. On the other hand, the needs of the time are too urgent for just the usual fare of speeches, conferences and so forth.

A global protest at the time of the Republican convention has an inescapable logic that is already propelling events but leaves other needs unmet. First, it is more than a year away. What to do in the meantime? In that meantime, the Democratic Party—the only vehicle with a realistic chance of producing a candidate who can defeat Bush—will have chosen its standard-bearer. Second, the New York demonstration blurs the specifically American responsibility for choosing its own government, which will, after all, be selected by American voters on November 2 of that year. Third, the New York demonstration will in its nature emphasize what it is against more than what it is for: Its time and place, after all, will have been chosen not by itself but by Rove.

Additional venues would appear to be in order. One is needed, I suggest, that is a mass event but not only a protest. Call it a working demonstration. Models have been offered on the global scale by the World Social Forum, which last met in Pôrto Alegre, Brazil, and next will meet in Mumbai, India. At a working demonstration, tens of thousands would assemble not to stand facing a single platform listening to speeches (some of which are interesting and some of which are not) or to march in protest but to attend a profusion of speeches and seminars; to scoop up literature from hundreds of booths; to confer in countless formal and informal meetings—to educate one another, to network, to agitate, to plan, to extend, to discover and strengthen common purposes. In such a meeting, the activity of the movement is not merely represented but conducted.

The aims of the event—to promote peace, justice and democracy and oppose the imperial path—would deliberately be defined loosely. It would be diverse and boisterous. It would be highly televisable. It would not be the instrument of any political party, but it would announce to the world the existence of a new political force. It would be a place for free speech, unpopular speech, provocative speech, unbuttoned speech. Timing is important. A choice of this November would still leave time to organize it and would position it to pour energy into the election campaigns about to begin. If a working demonstration is the place for a movement to be fully itself, then elections are the place for compromises—even, it may be, for the choice of lesser evils.

In short, the movement must learn to walk and chew gum at the same time. Just because the movement had established places where it could show itself and be itself without reserve, its members would feel free to work for whatever portion of their agenda they judge is really achievable in the elections of 2004. Such intervention in mainstream politics is a sine qua non of a serious movement. But success in the mainstream will not come without first building independent strength. Courage, like fear, is contagious, and those who are afraid to be themselves can never persuade others of the justice of their cause.

Jonathan Schell is the author of the just-published The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People *(Metropolitan).*

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Believer

TOM WICKER

THE CLINTON WARS.
By Sidney Blumenthal.
Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 822 pp. $30.

A reader knowing nothing of the 1990s might well come away from Sidney Blumenthal's lengthy account of *The Clinton Wars* with the impression that for eight years, Bill and Hillary Clinton were prevented from reforming and remaking the United States only by tireless and malignant conspiracies to thwart them. Mrs. Clinton even attributed public concern about her husband's affair with a White House intern to "a vast right-wing conspiracy."

As Blumenthal tells it, the original conspiracy was aimed at doing in the Clintons by exposing unethical and even criminal pre–White House behavior on their part; it then morphed without a break into what might be called the "Starr Conspiracy" to impeach and oust President Clinton for his relationship with the intern Monica Lewinsky—and for lying and encouraging others to lie to conceal this involvement.

Between these alleged "high crimes and misdemeanors" came the travel-office incident, the saga of Mrs. Clinton's missing law-firm documents, above all the suicide of White House aide Vincent Foster—all exaggerated into scandals reflecting darkly on the presidential couple, with Foster's death falsely inflated into a murder ordered, or suggested, or hinted at, or maybe just desired by the Clintons ("Who will rid us of this troublesome guy who knows too much?").

All these conspiracies were, of course, aided and abetted by most of the press, which eagerly accepted leaks and tips, first from the right-wing conspirators, then from Ken Starr, the special prosecutor first appointed to look into the Clintons' past activities (mostly Whitewater, the now-forgotten Arkansas real estate scandal that supposedly made them rich). When nothing was panned up that creek, Starr turned to the Lewinsky matter. Ultimately, he did succeed in getting Clinton impeached by the House, but neither he nor the various other conspirators were able to win a conviction in the Senate. Thus the Clintons, against all odds, were able to hold on to the office to which Bill Clinton had been twice elected.

Of course, Blumenthal never makes the blunt charge that all the Clintons' problems resulted from conspiracies. But more than half of his interminable book is devoted to proving that there *was* a vast right-wing conspiracy, just as Hillary said; that Ken Starr was an offspring of it, if not literally its child; that Starr was an unprincipled and out-of-control prosecutor whose aides were worse; and that the press fell all over itself lapping up their illicit leaks, then elevating their unsupported, often false charges into headlines and TV flashes.

Not that there wasn't a real conspiracy; the anti-Clinton apparatus financed by Richard Mellon Scaife and fueled by old Arkansas political and personal animosities has been well documented, if seldom in such detail as Blumenthal has unearthed. And not that Ken Starr was a model prosecutor with a real case to pursue, or that the press distinguished itself in dealing with his office or Clinton's. But in making these valid points, Blumenthal habitually overstates the case—either by the copious details of time, place and personality he provides, or rhetorically.

If Clinton worship were a religion, The Clinton Wars *would be its Bible; whatever the book's merits, dispassion is not among them.*

Clinton, for instance, on arrival in Washington in 1993, is described as thinking he knew the city. But "he didn't expect a capital seething with resentment, envy, and hostility directed at him and his wife." Actually, "from the start, the new President became an object of hatred and so did anyone who supported or associated with him in almost any way." Nor did he face a great crisis that would have allowed him to fend

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off "the internecine warfare, blinding rage, and sheer destructiveness that converged on Bill and Hillary Clinton." Not everyone will remember the Washington atmosphere of 1993 in just that way.

But then, Blumenthal is hardly a dispassionate observer of the Clintons. It may even be to his credit that he is frank about his devotion to and belief in them, even though the President—as Blumenthal eventually realizes—lied to him, to his face and from the start, about Monica Lewinsky. Five days after Lewinsky's name was posted in an unsubstantiated Matt Drudge report, Hillary Clinton discussed the matter with Blumenthal. "She had always known her husband [he reports] to befriend people in trouble, and as she saw it, this was another example." Blumenthal relates that he "had no reason to doubt Hillary's sincerity...and whatever my doubts, I wanted to believe her—to believe along with her."

That same day, in private conversation with Blumenthal, the President himself insisted that "he had been trying to help [Lewinsky].... It's very difficult for me not to want to help. That's how I am. I want to help people." Blumenthal advised him to be more self-protective with "troubled" persons like the intern, and to ignore Dick Morris's advice to give a speech confessing all, since the President insisted he had done nothing wrong. Not at all clear, however, is what Lewinsky was troubled about, or why she needed help, or what help the President gave her; but on the basis of these two conversations, Blumenthal loyally, and it seems eagerly, believed Clinton's account through the long months until the truth finally emerged.

Even then, according to Blumenthal, Clinton had done nothing for "money, power, status, or fame," nor out of "meanspiritedness, resentment or cruelty." He had merely given in to his weakness, which was not necessarily sex but his "need for affirmation, attention, and affection." He had even "known that it was a mistake but he made it anyway." Blumenthal's final judgment is that the Lewinsky affair was "stupid," a conclusion widely reached by less-informed persons.

Sidney Blumenthal became acquainted with the Clintons in 1987 at one of those year-end "Renaissance Weekends" at Hilton Head, South Carolina, where small groups of eggheads and hopefuls discussed political, cultural and religious subjects. They formed a close friendship, but Blumenthal did not abandon a flourishing journalism career (the *Washington Post*, *The New Republic* and *The New Yorker*, among others) until Clinton was elected to a second term, in 1996. This late entry into the Administration does not deter him from some apparently inside reporting about the first term—for example, a sharp, largely sympathetic sketch of Dick Morris. Then, in early 1997, Blumenthal officially "came aboard"—as White House people like to say—as an assistant to the President and a member of the senior White House staff. His first day on the job he was greeted by a Matt Drudge "exclusive": Sometime in the past, by somebody, Drudge charged, Blumenthal had been accused of being a wifebeater. This baseless calumny was never proven—Drudge seldom proves anything, or has to—or retracted, even though Blumenthal brought suit.

According to Blumenthal, Bill Clinton's weakness wasn't sex, but rather his 'need for affirmation, attention, and affection.'

With that beginning, the author's tendency to see a conspiracy everywhere he looks may be better understood. It does not seem to me, however, to serve the Clintons well. Theirs (it's hard to speak of them singly, though that's unfair to both) was a more substantial two terms than generally conceded, especially in improving the incomes of the poor and in eliminating the federal deficit, which George W. Bush is now quickly restoring. Blumenthal is insistent, moreover, that the Clinton Administration was alert to the threat of terrorism long before the September 11, 2001, attacks that galvanized Bush, and was doing something about it before having to leave office.

Here and there, Blumenthal takes time out from counterbashing the conspirators to mention some straight political achievements or failures—how Clinton agonized over welfare reform, outsmarted Newt Gingrich (now enjoying a second coming in the Bush-Rumsfeld Pentagon), toured Africa, etc.—but these tend to stick out like sore thumbs from the general concentration on baleful enemies and their machinations. Clinton returns from his African trip in one paragraph and Ken Starr talks to reporters in the next: "You cannot defile the temple of justice" (a fair example of Starr's missionary style). And after truckloads of the sex-sprinkled Starr report (on which the Clinton impeachment was based) were sent to Congress, "the degeneration of politics into personal demonization reflected the growing frenzy of the effort to overthrow the President."

In *The Clinton Wars*, that is depicted as always at the root of any opposition to Clinton—not politics as usual but "the effort to overthrow him." That effort, in Blumenthal's telling, was based on the sense that Clinton in 1992 had somehow usurped the presidency from George Bush the First and the Republican Party, to whom it properly belonged; that the Clintons were vaguely unworthy and illegitimate, as shown by their past in Arkansas; that any means, fair or foul, could be employed to send a "cracker" like Clinton back to the boondocks. Sally Quinn of the *Washington Post* is invoked to accuse them of being outsiders in Washington and therefore unwelcome in the White House—as if every new President is not something of an outsider, and unwelcome to some substantial portion of the electorate.

Blumenthal settles not a few scores—with Starr and his staff, of course, with the "Arkansas Project" conspirators and with Matt Drudge, but notably with members of the press. He is right in the criticism that too many reporters too easily swallowed leaked, often false, information from Starr's office and from some of the earlier conspirators. But the overall impression Blumenthal leaves is that many of these reporters—he even unloads on David Broder, the "dean" of political correspondents, and is particularly harsh on William Kristol and Dorrance Smith, an ABC producer—were motivated by personal hostility to Clinton, not by politics or even by a desire to get out in front of the opposition and ahead in their careers. No documentation supports this view.

Nineteen pages are devoted to the involved story of how Christopher Hitchens, then a columnist for *The Nation*, filed an affidavit during the Clinton impeachment trial that, had the affidavit been verified, would have shown that Blumenthal perjured himself in his Senate testimony. But it was *not* verified, no perjury was proved and therefore the long Hitchens story becomes largely irrelevant to the Clinton ordeal. A mystery remains, at least in this book, as to why Hitchens, a writer known for his anti-Clinton views, intervened in a way that might have damaged Blumenthal, supposedly a friend of long standing. But it's also puzzling that Blumenthal details this episode, of no substantive importance to the Clinton "wars," at such length. He never discovered Hitchens's motive and concludes only that he was surprised to find his old friend "capable of

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doing harm without conscience or regret."

Blumenthal is right that many of the false reports about the Clintons were based on unidentified sources, an indefensible journalistic tactic that few practitioners—including me—have managed totally to avoid or evade. He is, however, not above relying on unnamed sources himself, frequently quoting "my source" in Starr's office or relating unsubstantiated anecdotes. Finally, he becomes a source himself, though only to independent and fair-minded reporters (as Blumenthal saw them):

> Under the duress of scandalmongering... I realized I could not simply respond to daily events or give answers to questions from the White House press corps. I had to bring to reporters' attention the facts that otherwise might elude them.... I was using the Internet and the fax machine... expanding the range and content of the stories the press covered.

Telling, that is, the White House side of the story, against Starr's version.

The Clinton Wars runs on for 822 pages, and on some matters is immensely detailed and fascinating. It is not, however, and is not intended to be, the dispassionate, balanced account of Bill Clinton's day-by-day presidency, his successes and failures, strengths and weaknesses. Such an account is badly needed for any significant President, but that volume will have to wait for a less committed historian, one more interested in the success of, say, Clinton's fiscal and economic policies or in the outcome of his welfare reform, than in the origins of Whitewater—whatever Whitewater was. ■

TAKE TWO

Wrestling With Augie March

LEONARD KRIEGEL

Editor's Note: With Leonard Kriegel's meditation on Saul Bellow's 1953 novel The Adventures of Augie March, *we introduce a series of occasional essays revisiting classic works of literature, history and criticism.*

The struggle to force language to accept its own power is what molds the idea of becoming a writer that most of us have when young. There is a moment in time when that struggle is felt most profoundly and intimately. It may be the first conscious encounter with a literary "classic"; or it may be when the world is made recognizable by an author one never before heard of. For me, it was not reading *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or *The Sound and the Fury* that turned the world upside down, although my first encounters with Joyce and Faulkner had a most profound effect. It was reading *The Adventures of Augie March*, the novel that gave me my first literary hero. Augie is now 50 years old, and it may be that I am writing this not only to acknowledge a debt to that heroic plebeian but as a birthday card to my past. I obviously owe more to Saul Bellow, Augie's creator, than I do to Augie. Yet I prefer to think my primary debt is to a character in a novel who, in announcing to the world "I am an American," assumed the role of writer for me and any number of other young men back in 1953. Bellow may not have intended Augie to be a writer (although the novel suggests that he did), but by telling the story of his adventures he allowed the reader to impose the role on his hero.

The Adventures of Augie March, like most *Bildungsromans*, has no real plot. Its appeal was, and is, to what Irving Howe termed the "mingling of high-flown intellectual bravado with racy-tough street Jewishness." At its center is Augie, an offspring of immigrants who, with a voice that achieves a singularity seldom found in fiction, succeeds in possessing America by seizing its language for his own. Augie is something of a *Luftmensch*—but an urban *Luftmensch*, an American *Luftmensch*, receptive not only to experience but to what gives all experience meaning, the power of language. During the course of his adventures Augie tries on professions like a bum searching for a well-fitting suit off the rack or a writer searching to pad a book-jacket blurb. He trains eagles, bodyguards Trotsky in Mexico, is a merchant marine sailor during the war. But his true profession is as a connoisseur of the language, a guardian of the temple of words from which the urban immigrant was once so rudely excluded. Here both Augie and Bellow's novel achieve distinction. For few American novels, before or since, have more firmly stamped the language than *The Adventures of Augie March*.

Its opening is as striking as any postwar American novel can boast of. *Invisible Man* begins more dramatically, but Augie's very simplicity makes this an opening that is both superbly complex and profoundly moving:

> I am an American, Chicago born—Chicago, that somber city—and go at things as I have taught myself, free-style, and will make the record in my own way: first to knock, first admitted; sometimes an innocent knock, sometimes a not so innocent. But a man's character is his fate, says Heraclitus, and in the end there isn't any way to disguise the nature of the knocks by acoustical work on the door or gloving the knuckles.

I was 20 when I read these sentences—a young 20, I should add—and fell in love not only with the language of an urban American writer but with the exhilarating sense that even a plebeian Bronx cripple might aspire to the world of "literature." Like Augie, I was a product of the city. Yet while I had already read James T. Farrell and Meyer Levin, Bellow was the first writer to tell me that as long as one remained faithful to the language of urban America one still had a chance at becoming a writer. It is the flavor of Augie's language, what in Yiddish would be called *tam*, even more than his Chicago that is Augie's most profound urban secret.

During a lifetime of reading I have loved few novels more on first reading. Yet whenever I pick *Augie* up, to meet his exuberant embrace of the world once again, I find myself wishing that Bellow had been more honest. It would have been even better if he had allowed Augie to confess from the novel's onset that he was not merely a Chicago-born American but that he always intended to be the writer whose memoir we are reading. Would that admission have damaged the rhythm of Bellow's prose or lessened Augie's grandeur? I doubt it. Perhaps I might then have thought of him as being as trustworthy as he is bold. Augie is the writer-in-training who lives a compulsively experiential life, for the best training for the literary craft turns out to be life lived as completely and thoroughly as possible. Living is Augie's university; what

Leonard Kriegel's last book was Flying Solo *(Beacon).*

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Janeane Garofalo is a longstanding *Nation* reader.

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adolescents used to sneer at as "the school of hard knocks" is his Harvard and Yale. The sheer density of experience—living actively and consciously—is what offers him validation. What better preparation for the writer's life can one ask for?

Augie's adventures provide the reader with the full measure of what he possesses, an urban world that is as fresh as it is intimate. Yet his greatest possession is his immense receptivity to experience. Had he opened the book by announcing, "I am a writer," it probably wouldn't have had the power of "I am an American." Each line frames ambition and each is different from "I am an accountant" or "I am a physician." It is experience that links Augie's life to the reader's. Even fifty years later, what remains striking about his adventures is that they should still evoke so strong a sense of envy in us. That is why Augie is the embodiment of the writer. To this day, he hammers at the pulse of memory and desire like a smart club fighter joyfully pounding a heavy bag because he finally has been given a shot at the one big payday we all dream of. He keeps himself from thinking too much about what he is pursuing with dedication and passion. Like fighters, writers pound at the world—only with words, not fists. Armed with a gloriously urbanized speech, Augie is the writer seeking to transform the world until he succeeds in making of ambition a form of discipline.

The hunger for what has been lost is what one increasingly responds to in books as one grows older. A life reconstructed in imagination is more rooted than a life that is merely lived, and that is as true of *Augie March* as it is of Proust or Hemingway. As events command memory, they become meaningful. And for Bellow's protagonist their meaning is that they connect him to what makes him Augie March. The past is not made simpler through memory; it is simply made more focused. Distilling the past through his imagination allows Augie to realize that what is called "reality" has very little to do with whether or not a moment in his life is successful. It has to do, rather, with how well that moment has been embedded in the writer's eye. Success is just one of the many debts the writer must work through to get to the truth of the past. What happened is rarely as important as why it happened.

When I first met Augie I envied his conviction that destiny must reflect the meaning of one's life. Only a man convinced of his own singularity and of the power of his presence can be vain enough to believe that it is his experience that moves the universe. Augie isn't passive, but he is quietly audacious. Whether he is serving as one of Trotsky's bodyguards or hunting eagles with the lovely if slightly crazed heiress Thea Fenchel, he is conscious of the primacy of his experience. And he needs that experience the way a thirsty man needs water. It is what marks him as an American. Receptive to the world, he is immodest enough to expect the world to be equally receptive to him and his needs. Able to absorb experience, he offers himself as the "new man," Rousseau's blank slate transformed into flesh. Because he is imbued with the energy of urban rather than agrarian America, he is able to stand de Crèvecoeur's hallowed agrarian version of the American new man on its head. Jefferson would have disliked him, yet he also would have realized that Augie was as "new" a man as twentieth-century America could ask for. Each experience tempts not only his innocence but his receptivity to life.

Augie March needs experience the way a thirsty man needs water, and this is what marks him as an exemplary American.

Although he boasts of being "Chicago-born" Augie is as unlike the 1930s street tough James T. Farrell immortalized in Studs Lonigan as one could possibly be. Not only is he smarter than Studs, he isn't afraid of using his intelligence. A child of a still-immigrant urban America, he assumes that anyone who has been molded by the city is tougher than small-town protagonists who line the nation's literary past like wax figures in Madame Tussaud's. The receptivity to experience is the only constant in urban man's life, the one quality Augie considers essential to his sense of self. If he lived in the Soviet Union he would have been labeled—accurately—a "rootless cosmopolitan." For that is what he is. Chicago is his home, but the willingness to roam feeds his desire to learn from the chaos surrounding him. He glories in urban life because it is chaotic and rootless, and because it allows him to be the sole judge of what he can do with his life.

Bellow was still a political liberal when he wrote *Augie*. He may even still have thought of himself as a man of the left (although James Atlas suggests in his biography that Bellow's politics were always the product of the times rather than of any deep-rooted political conviction). It was probably inadvertent, but the novel is as powerful a defense of free-enterprise self-assertion as an American novelist has given us. From Augie's perspective, the world exists to teach him how to devote his daring to the pursuit of success and self-discovery. It doesn't matter where he serves as life's pupil, whether in the poolroom of the wheelchair-bound Einhorn or drifting in a lifeboat in the Atlantic after his merchant ship has been torpedoed. His task remains to keep faith with a vision of himself as the American in search of the world, as much Columbus as modern life will permit. Capable of stretching the truth, Augie is no liar. He doesn't need to embroider experience; pursuing it is reward enough. Ultimately, he is precisely what he tells us he is in the novel's opening: Chicago-born, the American in quest of the independent self.

Augie is also one of a handful of literary characters who have assumed so powerful and meaningful a presence in my own life that I was to measure self as well as ambition against their example. His adventures may be fiction, but they aren't fictitious to a man raised in the same sort of urban world he was raised in. Is it any wonder that to this day I think of Augie just as I did when I first read the novel fifty years ago, as my rival in the pursuit of reality? Even back then, however, Augie pressed me against my own shortcomings, made me feel small, diminished. Obsessed by the trauma of having lost my legs to polio at 11, I envied the breadth of his world, envied how he sucked up experience like a vacuum of the soul's ambition. I, meanwhile, was a gimp measuring himself against a character in a novel able to absorb all that life offered because he knew it was the only way he could make his way in the world.

At 20, I still told myself that it was only natural to focus on the price one had to pay to survive as a cripple in the America of 1953. Cripples weren't expected to be heard or seen then. The assumptions I made about the world—that it was hostile and unforgiving and that if I wished to have a life I would have to hurl myself against its indifference like a battering ram—had largely been borne out before Augie appeared on the scene. Not that I was bitter. At 20, I was far too busy experiencing the joy of being able to move by myself from place to place, even on braces and crutches, to feel bitter. And it was still easy to console myself for loss. I could thank a God I claimed not to believe in or thank fate or my lucky stars for possessing so rich an interior life. Dreams do not change merely because the body does. Yet

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it grated on me to discover that I wasn't as receptive to the sheer variety of experience as Augie was. And it infuriated me to discover that he could meet the world so openly, whereas I was irritated at that receptivity to experience.

It was that, along with the language, that made me fall in love with the novel. Here I was, a cripple thirsting for vengeance. And here was Augie, the American chasing after self-exploration. I furiously wanted to get even with the virus that had crippled me, whereas Augie views his body as if it is the property of some casual acquaintance. In the quest for experience he refused to be trapped by flesh, bone and muscle, whereas I am enraged to this very day (a man now closing in on 70) by the bodily grace I was forced to surrender at 11. Illness formed my angle of vision; health formed Augie's. That is most infuriating. It doesn't matter that I know there is a point in life when a man should simply call it quits with the disasters of the past. I was unable to do that when I met Augie; I am still unable to do it. Unlike Augie, I am still obsessed by what happened to me—not by the pain but by the need to accept the experience and get beyond it. A cripple's Cartesian syllogism: It happened to me, therefore I am.

On the verge of my biblical three score and ten, I am in thrall to old adolescent fantasies of getting even. Like Augie's mentor, the crippled poolroom philosopher William Einhorn, I hate being neither the master of my fate nor the captain of my soul. Einhorn, Augie says, is the first superior man he has known. But why should that comfort me? I must still cry "I want!" to an indifferent world—and what I want is everything that Einhorn and I don't have, what I haven't had since I was 11. I don't care how childish or adolescent it is, and I don't care if I sound like a child ogling Santa Claus in Macy's as he checks his Christmas list. I want to walk on the beach, to fuck on top, to climb a mountain (it doesn't have to be Everest; any mountain will do). Above all, I want to rid my life of each and every "I want" that stains it like some lingering Rorschach nightmare.

Unlike Augie, I was blindsided when young. Like him, I focused on my own coming-of-age. Only, like Einhorn, struggling with the life of the cripple taught me that I had to compensate for what I had lost. I was too busy trying to tough life out to understand what Augie was trying to show me—that experience embodies its own definition and that experience remains its own finest moment, all experience and every experience. Maybe the desire to write originated in the body's need for vengeance. Yet not even that, if true, negates the experience of being crippled. "I couldn't take it, and I took it," Einhorn tells Augie, in the most powerful portrait of a cripple any American writer, cripple or normal, has given us. With an urban whiff of reality that speaks of all that sustained illness can do to one's soul, Einhorn wants Augie to understand the daily humiliations that life imposes on the cripple. His anguish is more moving, more real, than Ahab's celebrated metaphysical rage. Einhorn is not only tougher and nastier than Melville's sea captain, he is a truer cripple. Like most cripples, he has little interest in the nature of evil, and he doesn't care whether what has been done to him possesses metaphysical meaning. It's bad that it happened, worse that it happened to him!

As a writer, illness gave me my subject. As a man, it denied me a chance at the life I dreamed of.

When I read *Augie March* I still dreamed of a miraculous recovery that would allow me to box and play ball again. Only, what Einhorn says to Augie is useless to those who dream of miracles. I admired Einhorn and I envied Augie. Yet I hated Augie too. I hated how he made me feel less than I was. No amount of rhetoric about courage (necessity is the only mother of what we call "courage") would change that. The prospect of being a writer couldn't take the place of dead legs for a 20-year-old searching for the prowess stolen from his body nine years earlier.

As a writer, illness gave me a subject. As a man, it denied me a chance at the life I dreamed of. The ugly dream of becoming beautiful, but their dreams don't make them beautiful. The stupid dream of becoming smart, but their dreams don't make them smart. Augie took a life from his dreams because he could look at those dreams as he looked at the world—from a skeptical, urban distance. The willingness to distance himself from his experience made him a better man than I was. And it tells why I envied him then and why I still envy him today. Augie brought all his baggage to his life as well as to art. But what excuse do I have for the limited perspective I have allowed illness to impose on me? A rose is a rose and a gimp is a gimp. So what? A writer should be able to do more than trace the reasons why he searches for revenge.

If Augie were an actual person rather than a character in a novel, he would be Bellow's age, well into his 80s. Compared with a man in his 80s, those knocking on the door of that biblical three score and ten are mere striplings. But who wants to approach that biblical allotment still dreaming of playing baseball or making love on top or running with his 2-year-old son (himself a man of 40 now) into some fantasized landscape of the mind? There should be statutes of limitation on our fantasies as well as on our crimes and misdemeanors. Other than the rage and anger they inspired in me, my dreams have been almost embarrassingly ordinary. And what is ordinary shies away from what is weird.

Yet even approaching my biblical allotment, the dreams keep coming and the fantasies keep reminding me of what I have lost. I should be better, I tell myself, than the illness that struck me down. I should write about other things. Only I'm not better and I don't write about other things, because the virus that crippled me also, in its perverse way, created me. In a sense, it owns me, just as the need for experience seems to own Augie. Illness is why I write and illness defines my life. Other realities stain that life, but I have avoided writing about them. Why don't they count too? Why don't they feed my rage and anger the way the daily struggle with what polio left in its wake does? Why can't I write about ordinary life and ordinary love, ordinary jealousy and ordinary scheming? Why can't I hunt eagles in Mexico with rich, pampered Thea?

Fifty years after we first met I still love Augie for the gifts Bellow endowed him with. Bellow has said that the novel "got out of hand," but I couldn't disagree more. In its language as well as in the protagonist Bellow created, it remains one of the truly memorable achievements in American fiction. Augie lives not only for the moment but in the moment—and that is his strength and glory. Yet that also explains why, in the midst of the admiration I feel for him, I still hate him. I hate him because he isn't Einhorn; I hate him because he isn't superior the way we cripples deceive ourselves into believing we are superior as we echo Einhorn's "I couldn't take it, and I took it." Augie isn't interested in taking it, although he admires the crippled poolroom philosopher. Unlike most *Luftmenschen*, he is practical. His

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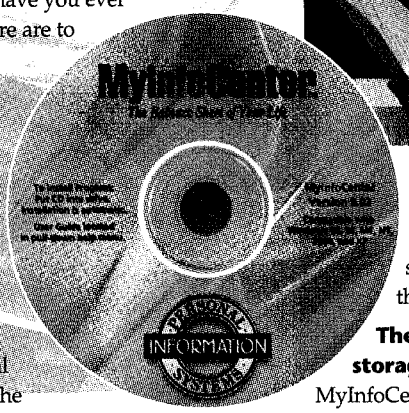

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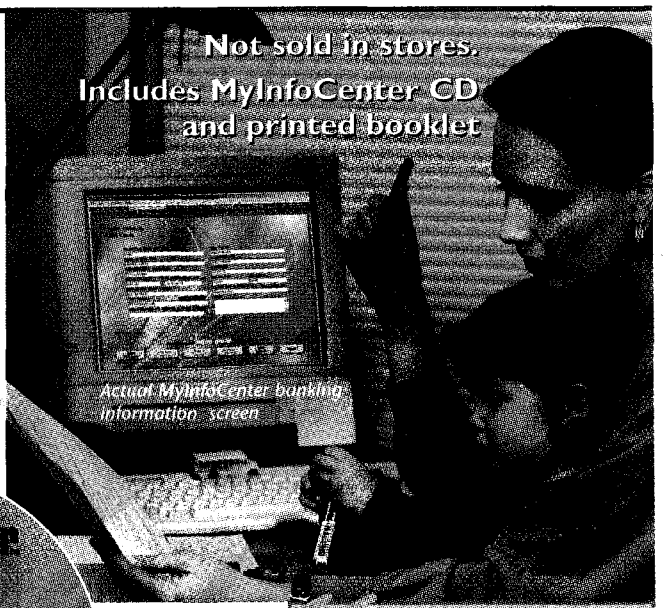

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world may look normal and steady, but he's smart enough to realize that it's gone askew. Experience has taught him caution, and caution shortchanges all those who insist on searching for the boundaries of their lives. And through each experience, Augie remains both judge and jury of the reader's emotions. The reader wants his approbation as he seldom wants the approbation of fictional characters. Would Augie, I wonder, empathize with my growing fascination with the crippled god Hephaestus? Like Einhorn and me, Hephaestus can't stand the thought of what being crippled has done to him. Not only is he the great artisan of Greek myth, he is also, even if grudgingly, the god who must willingly serve the other gods. It is he who must create the shield of Achilles—and that rankles me, but not because I have a problem with what he does. The smith's job is to create shields and weapons, and it does not matter whether one is a smith on earth or on Olympus. God or mortal, the smith is supposed to give meaning to metal. But that this godly gimp must create so magnificent a shield for such a self-centered, tiresome ass as Achilles makes me want to scream. Why not create the shield for himself? It's the work of his hands, his talent. Why glorify Achilles? Like metal grinding on concrete, such an injustice grates against my urge to call Hephaestus brother.

The writer must make his peace with bad bargains; the cripple doesn't. Augie accepts the limitations of experience, and even eventually comes to enjoy them. I can't accept them, because I have never had the experiences I want. And I never will have them. If there are times when we must make sense of bargains that aren't worth making sense of, that's not of much help to those of us trying to accept that we are Einhorns, not Augies. The experience that tells me what to write about is more limited than what Bellow has given his plebeian hero. One would have preferred other gifts—Sugar Ray Robinson's fists, Sandy Koufax's left arm, Ted Williams's batting eye. Yet like Augie, I tell myself that one must learn from what has shaped one. Like him, too, I still want to "go at things as I have taught myself," "first to knock." The issue most of us must face is rarely as simple as the right to serve as one's own Columbus. As Augie says, even when Columbus was sent back to Europe in chains it didn't "prove there was no America." Yet shouldn't experience have taught him, as it taught me, that limitations are just as likely to define life as ambition? Who, after all, has ever complained of his Hephaestian heel? ■

FILMS

Hell's Angel

STUART KLAWANS

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL • THE WEATHER UNDERGROUND • TYCOON: A NEW RUSSIAN

Romeo Dallaire has the name of a silent-movie star and a face to match: clear eyes, ample mustache, chin of cleft granite. In a better world, Steven Silver might have cast this man as the lead in some Ruritanian adventure. Instead, things being as they are, Silver has made a documentary, *The Last Just Man*, in which Dallaire appears as himself, the former chief of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Rwanda.

He's a riveting presence, not because he commands the camera but because he allows himself to be commanded by it, letting it crawl across his humbled face while he recounts how he could do nothing—nothing—to prevent hundreds of thousands of Rwanda's Tutsis from being hacked to death. In early 1994, while the slaughter was being prepared, General Dallaire issued warnings (which were ignored), made requests (which were denied), launched initiatives (which were contravened). The UN's member nations—with the United States at their head—blocked his every effort to stave off genocide; and for this he stubbornly, brokenly holds himself accountable.

I nominate Gen. Romeo Dallaire as spokesperson for this year's Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, on view in New York, June 13–26, at Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater. Speaking out of unimaginable pain, he spells out a conviction that animates the entire series: "We're now fighting for a philosophy, an ideology, that man is man is man. We're all the same." If that's the case, he says, then the work of safeguarding basic rights can no longer be an option of individual states. It must be the duty of all.

Though inconvenient for Bill Clinton and unacceptable to George Bush, this philosophy nevertheless runs through all the films and videos the festival presents this year. There are, of course, too many to summarize—although you might fit their subject matter into two categories, "Horror Stories" and "Tales of Human Resilience." I've mentioned a picture from the former group. Now let me call attention to three from the latter, which I pick out for being especially notable as filmmaking.

Balseros is one of those insanely ambitious documentaries in which the filmmakers follow several characters over the course of years, on the chance that what comes out may have the scope and complexity of a novel. In this case, the gamble paid off, thanks to the persistence of the Catalan directors, Carles Bosch and Josep M. Domènech, who went to Havana in August 1994 to film the mass exodus of Cubans on makeshift rafts. As you may recall, Fidel Castro and Bill Clinton were busy back then opening and closing their coasts. While the leaders played for political advantage, some 32,000 Cubans threw themselves into the sea, hoping to be borne to Florida on little more than inner tubes or sticks of wood. Many of these people drowned; others were picked up by the US Coast Guard (when Clinton switched policy) and taken back to Cuba, to be shut up at Guantánamo. Bosch and Domènech got remarkably candid interviews with seven of these would-be emigrants: hearing their complaints, learning about the family members they wanted to join in the United States (or would leave behind in Cuba), catching the impromptu neighborhood celebrations that attended the launching of their rafts. Later, the filmmakers visited these same rafters as they languished in Guantánamo, then recorded them as they entered the United States on visas and got settled (with the help of a Catholic charity) in Miami, the Bronx or Hartford.

All this was rich enough; but Bosch and Domènech returned five years later to track down the rafters and learn how they had fared. The answer, in brief, would be, "Some better, some worse." (One ends up in Miami, living happily with his family and working at Office Depot; another is last seen peddling drugs on the wintry streets of Albuquerque.) But the giving of brief answers is not what *Balseros* is about. It's about a historic rupture and the quotidian aftermath, year after year, as variously experienced by seven ordinary, fallible, highly

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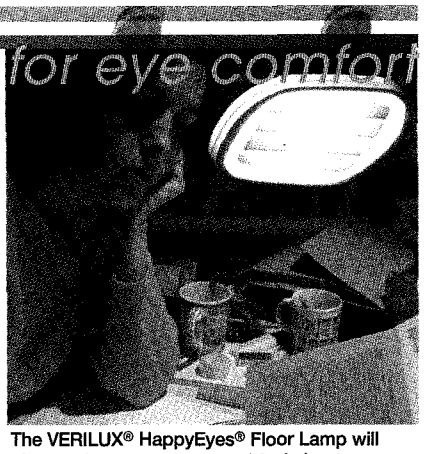

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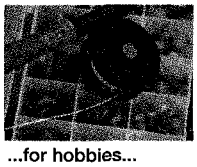

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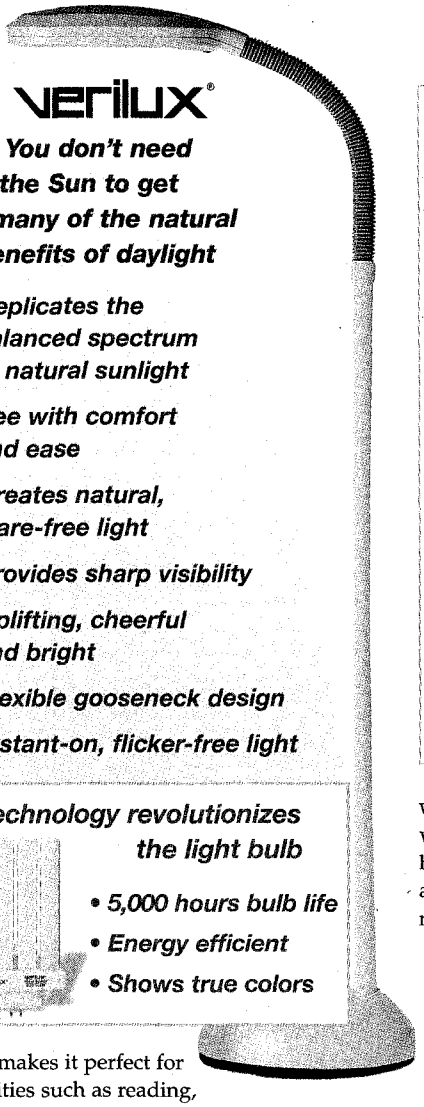

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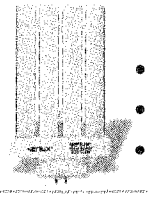

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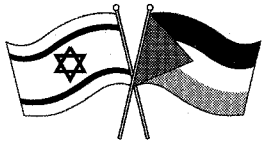

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determined people; and the film is so lovingly crafted, so focused in its concerns, that it even includes special theme music for the characters.

Also in the category of "Tales of Human Resilience" are two recent works by the extraordinary Palestinian filmmaker Hany Abu-Assad, recipient of this year's Nestor Almendros Prize. The first of the two, *Rana's Wedding*, is a fiction film that tracks its title character through a busy twelve hours as she hurries back and forth between Jerusalem and Ramallah. Her complex agenda: to defy her father, marry her bohemian boyfriend (who has at least one other woman hanging around—but what the hell?) and remain in Palestine rather than be carried back to Egypt. As Rana, Clara Khoury starts out in a fog, works up to a fury and ends up out of breath but exultant—which is the kind of thing that any actress likes to do, and which she carries off with a winning combination of sharp intelligence and ugly-duckling grace. You feel how right Rana is to want to stay in this place. She fits perfectly into a setting that Abu-Assad has caught brilliantly, and of necessity on the fly—a Jerusalem that's torn up, sinuous, maddening to negotiate and beautiful.

The Jerusalem-to-Ramallah route that Rana takes fictionally is itself the subject of the second of Abu-Assad's works in the festival: the documentary *Ford Transit*. In part, the film is a portrait of an outgoing, wised-up, slightly edgy young man named Rajai, who drives one of the West Bank's innumerable jitney vans. (They're the only reliable transportation for Palestinians, who ride them in stages from one roadblock to the next.) The film is also a travelogue, a study in sociology (since Palestinians from all walks of life ride the jitneys), a deeply responsible meditation on suicide bombing and an anthology of political essays. Providing the latter are some well-known figures, including Palestinian leader Hanan Ashrawi and Israeli-American filmmaker B.Z. Goldberg, whom Abu-Assad invited into the van for interviews.

Sorrowful, uproarious, clever, alarming and argumentative by turns, *Ford Transit* is a first-rate movie—one of those rare documentaries that seem to grasp a situation effortlessly, and as a whole. You could hold a Human Rights Watch Film Festival and show no other picture.

Fortunately, though, there are twenty-seven more.

* * *

Short Takes: For further insight into human rights and wrongs, I refer you to *The Weather Underground*, a fine new documentary by Sam Green and Bill Siegel that is now having its theatrical premiere at New York's Film Forum. To plunge straight into the confessional journalism that this subject requires in *The Nation*: Yes, I knew some Weathermen in 1969, and no, I wanted no part of them or their headcase Days of Rage, though, hey, if you'd ever suffered through a Progressive Labor Party meeting, you too would have wanted to smash something. Green and Siegel could have added to their viewers' understanding of the Weathermen, both above and below ground, had they evoked the youth movement's competing options: the blinkered, moralizing tedium of PLP, the minstrel antics of the Black Panthers' white sycophants, the woozy chaos that swirled around the Yippies, the numbing bourgeois niceness of the religious left. Don't get me wrong—I'm talking about my friends here. I'm talking about myself; and I can tell you, there was a context in which the Weathermen could temporarily have seemed plausible (though not if you understood the difference in muscle power between them and the Chicago Police Department). This context is missing in *The Weather Underground*.

But that's about all that Green and Siegel have left out. Using collage methods that at times recall the sixties films of Bruce Conner and Stan Brakhage (may his memory be a blessing), *The Weather Underground* pieces together old TV broadcasts, newsreel footage, home movies and period texts (both published and unpublished), bringing them together with present-day interviews of such principals as Bernardine Dohrn, Bill Ayers, Mark Rudd and (for the opposition) Todd Gitlin. What emerges, with uncommon emotional force, is the urgency of the sixties themselves. Do you think you've grown numb to that napalmed Vietnamese child running down the road, to Dr. King crying out against the war, to the slaughterhouse of Fred Hampton's apartment, to every stomach-churning utterance of Richard Nixon? *The Weather Underground* will make you feel them again, as vividly as when they were happening. The world explodes before your eyes, and you understand how Mark Rudd can speak today of "this knowledge that we couldn't handle. It was just too big. We didn't know what to do." Rudd does not exonerate himself for the destruction he caused while flailing about. He says he looks back with "guilt and shame," whereas others (like Naomi Jaffe) claim they would do it all again. Weigh these people's

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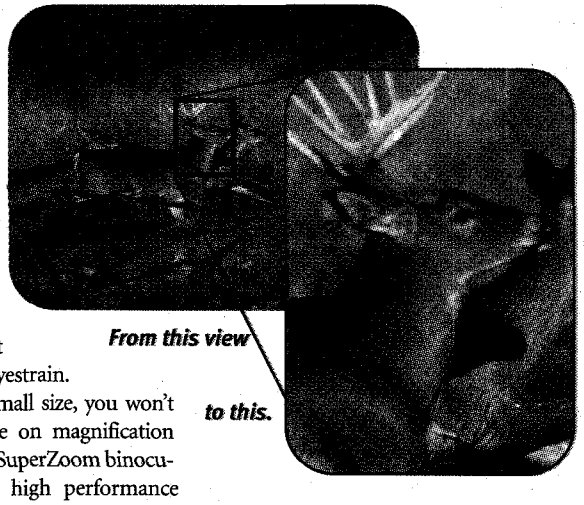

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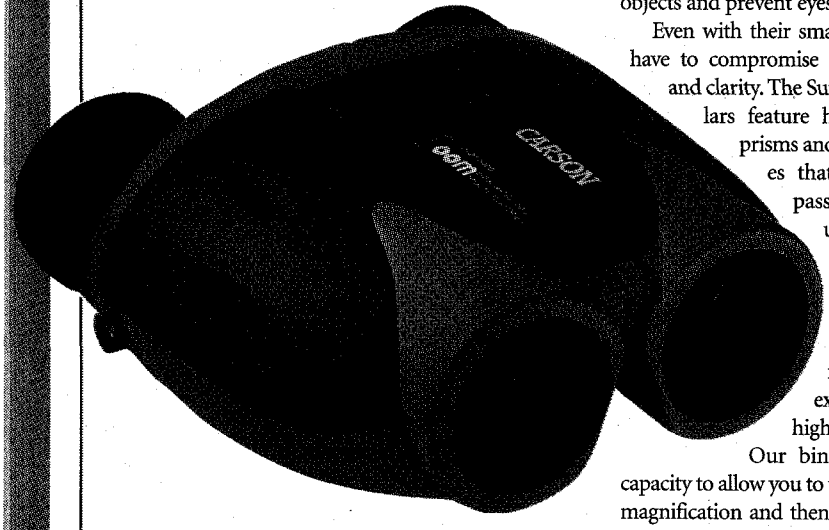

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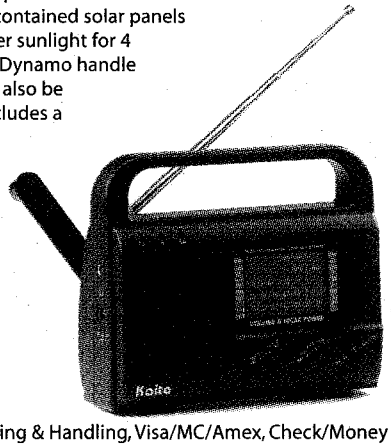

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outrages however you will, against the enormities of Richard Nixon or the measure of your own heart. *The Weather Underground* succeeds in letting you put them in the balance.

Beginning around 1985, the Soviet Union, too, seemed to explode. Smart young people—including graduate students—suddenly could venture into limitless new opportunities, or crimes (how could you tell the difference?), with no need for any measure other than "More." This stretch of recent history provides the subject of Pavel Lounguine's new film *Tycoon: A New Russian*.

Starring the brusque and vulpine Vladimir Mashkov, *Tycoon* is an engaging product of the wild-and-crazy school of Eastern European filmmaking. Most major scenes incorporate a band (ranging from an accordion duo to full orchestra), to add lilt to the drunken expostulations, fistfights, window-smashings, machine-gunnings, gratuitous sexual encounters and bazooka attacks that mark each turn of the plot. Sometimes there are llamas. Always there's money to be made—and in this fictionalized account of the career of Boris Berezovsky (whom Lounguine gleefully presents in the thinnest of disguises), money can be spun out of air, as if by magic. Just make sure you pay the Uzbeks to take care of the Georgians for you, and be careful of giving those thieves in the Kremlin any part of your action.

What most impresses me about *Tycoon*, apart from its zestful empathy for Berezovksy—I mean, Makovsky—is the way the picture recalls *Citizen Kane*. The story takes the form of a post-mortem inquiry, conducted not by a newsreel reporter but by a shambling, ironic investigator (Andrei Krasko) who has been stripped of authority in advance. (He's the one thoroughly sympathetic figure in the movie. Think of him as the old Russian.) The investigator interviews people who knew Makovsky and gets their sometimes conflicting accounts, which play out in flashbacks of occasionally baroque complexity. I don't claim that Lounguine is as good at this game as Welles; but, with the subtitle of his movie, he does remind you that the original title of *Kane* was *American*.

Unfortunately, Lounguine pulls a plot twist in *Tycoon: A New Russian* that recalls, rather too heavily, another film with Welles. Better not to dwell on that. I'd rather say that *Tycoon*, at its best, reminds us of how Welles's masterpiece was a hot-off-the-presses piece of contemporary history. That's what *Tycoon* is, too—and I say, it's terrific. ■

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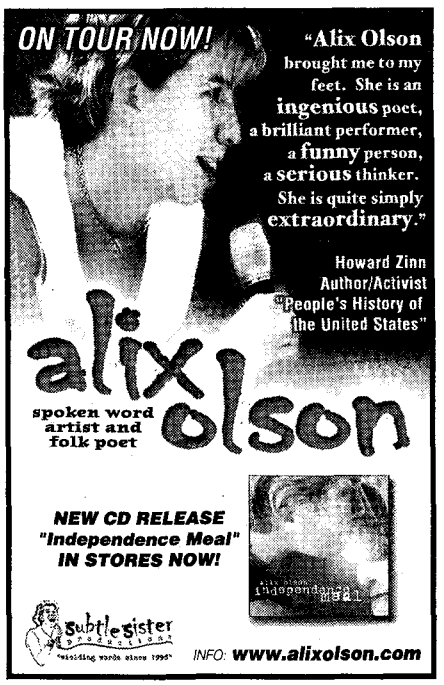
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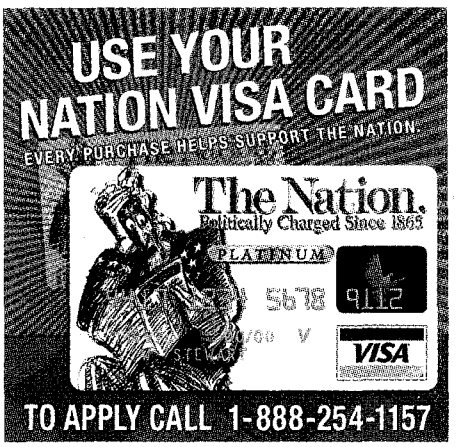

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From McCarthy to Ashcroft: The Blacklist Revisited

■ *Nation* publisher and McCarthy era expert Victor Navasky and screenwriter and acclaimed author Norma Barzman will discuss the Hollywood blacklist in the McCarthy and Ashcroft eras, on Monday, June 16 at 7 PM at the New School University, in a free event sponsored by the Nation Institute and the New School University. This event coincides with the re-release of Navasky's National Book Award winning *Naming Names*, and the recent publication of Barzman's critically acclaimed *The Red and the Blacklist*. Copies of each title will be available for sale and an author signing will immediately follow the discussion. "The Blacklist Revisited" will be held at the New School University's Tishman Auditorium, 66 W. 12th Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. Admission is free; doors open at 6:30 PM. Reserved seating is available by calling (212) 229-5353.

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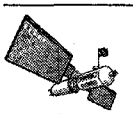

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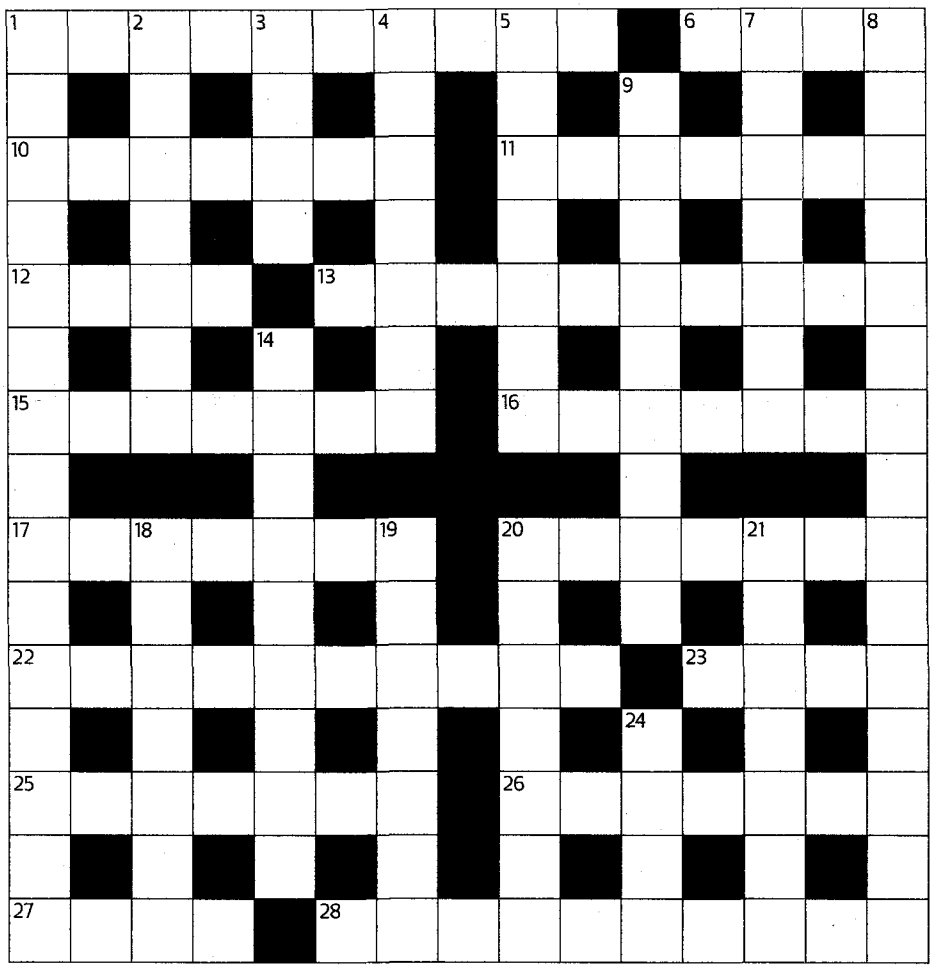

ACROSS

1 and **6** Existed in a retrogressive way, to find cooks fade out of the rest—but it's good to eat! (6-4,4)

10 Though one may be responsible for treason, we allow him to help make the laws. (7)

11 Our teen troubles seem to be going by the way! (2,5)

12 and **24** down Art gets superficially tidied with what implies a bad spill. (3,5)

13 A British doctor (and a foolish one!) take the wrong road, being in a business which is a matter of state. (10)

15 A boy is connected with quite a racket, called on the carpet for being high. (7)

16 Certainly not a high wind, but it might be cause for disqualification. (3,4)

17 Digs up a sex problem about David the philosopher. (7)

20 A very old-fashioned way to curse, but Petruchio could have said it as a final word! (7)

22 What is laid in addition to what is thrown in the pub by design? (It's molding!) (3,3,4)

23 Do you have to go back to the French to see how to "make eyes"? (4)

25 In second class, one is cut improperly but eaten as a cookie by the Londoner. (7)

26 One sees the answer to "Et tu?" 'til I zeroed in on how to take advantage of something. (7)

27 and **28** Things that can bend aren't very strong, evidently, if you're so timorous! (A pretty low-down joint!) (4,2,3,5)

DOWN

1 A piece of plumbing for the sink that can't be found might give one a real pain! (10,5)

2 The thing that moves people to get sick with a tropical climbing orchid (though we may think of it as only a bean). (7)

3 You can say it's a tangled tale if you're dead this way! (4)

4 A word of warning to a person who may be the boss. (7)

5 Omnipotent-appearing costume? (7)

7 A castle in England, and in Germany surrounded by what is not really real! (7)

8 Do women choose them because they are supposed to have a lot of pluck? (7,8)

9 Not very happy, but very smart—which might be against the grain to some. (9)

14 A way to get rid of the players proves the eccentric is unwanted. (3,3,3)

18 Heavy-going when in deep, which sounds like something the diva has to hit. (4,3)

19 The sort of nut seed found only in a mountain range of Europe. (7)

20 Miss Peep doesn't have a smooth following in this part of the city! (7)

21 The age when tatters show up first, according to Doctorow. (7)

24 See 12 across

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